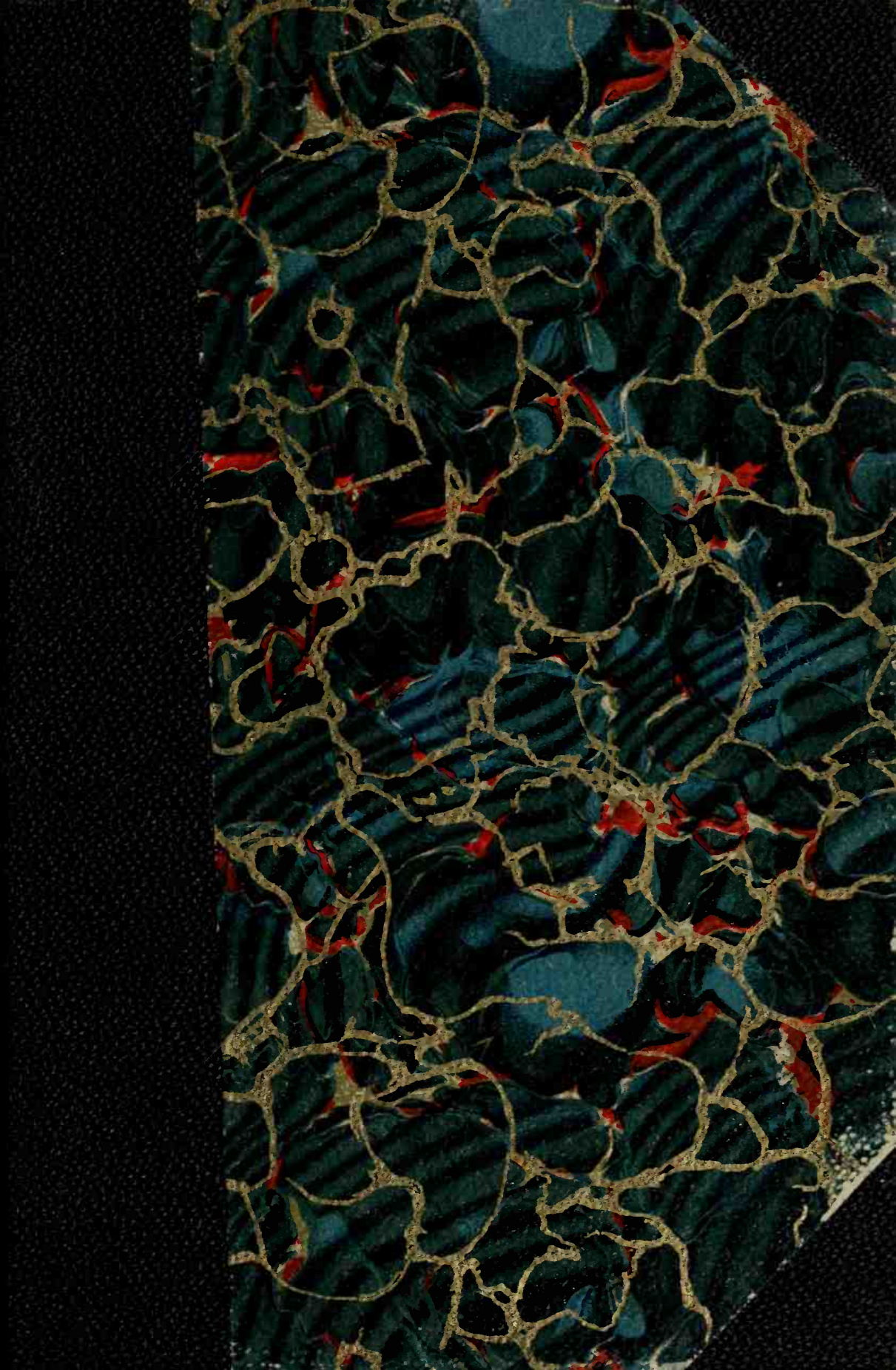

Tales from "Blackwood"

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"YOU'VE BEEN TOOK IN, MARY"
See page 40

TALES FROM "BLACKWOOD"

Being the most Famous Series of Stories ever Published Especially Selected from that Celebrated English Publication

Selected by

H. CHALMERS ROBERTS

Illustrations by JESS. EMILY BRANGS

NEW YORK
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1912

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TALES FROM "BLACKWOOD."

COUSIN JOHN'S PROPERTY.

"ON the 11th ult., at Point de Galle, Ceylon, on the voyage home, John Simpson, Esq., her Majesty's Consul at Tranquebar."

"Bless my life, Sally," said Mr Simpson, almost choking himself with his muffin, "here's cousin John dead!"

Mr Simpson had the 'Times' for an hour every morning (at sixpence per week), and that hour being his breakfast allowance also, he read and ate against time, taking a bite of muffin, a sip of tea, and a glance at the paper alternately; and as he was very short-sighted, and always in a hurry, there seemed imminent risk sometimes of his putting the paper into his mouth instead of the muffin.

"You don't mean to say so, Simpson," said the lady on the other side of the little fireplace.

"Cousin John dead! Why, he was to be in town next month—it's impossible! Where do it say so?"

And she made an attempt to reach across for the paper; but it was a long stretch, and Mrs Simpson was stout, and hardly made due allowance for that fact in her instructions to her staymaker; so Mr Simpson found himself master of the position, and proceeded to read the announcement again, with a proper sense of importance. Miss Augusta Simpson, and her brother, Master Samuel, who occupied the seats at the other side of the family breakfast-table, had risen from their places, and with their mouths and eyes open, and Master Samuel's knife arrested in a threatening position, formed rather a striking tableau.

"Then that Surrey property comes to us, Mr S.," exclaimed the lady, as she left her arm-chair, and made good her hold on one side of the 'Times,' of which her husband still pertinaciously retained possession.

"It comes to me, my dear, as next heir, by uncle Sam's will—no doubt of it." If Mr Simpson intended a little gentle self-assertion in this speech, it was so unusual with him, that Mrs Simpson was good enough not to notice it.

"It's worth two or three thousand a-year, Simpson, isn't it?"

"About one thousand, or fourteen hundred at

most, my dear, as I have told you before," replied the husband. "It's a very nice property. Dear me! poor John! only to think! that he should never have come home to enjoy it!" and the good-natured Mr Simpson gave an honest sigh to the memory of his departed cousin, and for a moment forgot his own accession of fortune.

"Well, well, life's uncertain with all of us. I never thought as you'd have outlived him, Simpson; he was ten years younger than you, if he were a day. I did think it might have been our Samuel's in days to come, supposing John died without children, as was always likely from what I heard of him. I often did say to myself I hoped Sammy might be a gentleman."

Samuel wiped his lips in preparation for that crisis. He had been eating a second egg surreptitiously and hastily. Only a mother's eyes could have detected the future gentleman under the pinafore at that moment. "There's the 'bus, father," he shouted, jumping up with the view of effecting a diversion from his own operations; "there's the 'bus coming round!"

Mr Simpson rose mechanically, and dropped the 'Times.' The habits of twenty years were not to be shaken even by the sudden prospect of a thousand a-year. But his daughter, with the spirit of a true British maiden in the hour of fortune, showed herself equal to the occasion.

"Who wants the 'bus?" said she, with an indignant shove to Samuel; "Pa a'nt going by 'busses now."

Like all truly great speeches, it was short, and to the purpose. As such, it was long remembered in the family. It awoke them at once to the duties and the pleasures of their new position. That useful public vehicle did not take Mr Simpson to Aldermanbury that morning. The conductor looked at the well-known door in vain; the civil driver even let his horses linger a little ere he turned the corner; and both turned a long and last inquiring gaze in the direction of Portland Terrace, No. 4. "What's come o' the governor this morning, Bill? Are we arter or afore our time?"

"Not above two minutes arter; he've never been and gone by the Royal Blue?"

"Don't think he'd be so mean as that; summat's amiss, *how*-ever."

And with this compliment to Mr Simpson's business habits, the omnibus lumbered on without him. Great was the surprise, and as the morning wore on, even the anxiety, in the little dark offices in Aldermanbury. Such a thing as Mr Simpson's absence, without due cause assigned, was unknown hitherto in that most punctual and respectable establishment; and Mr Styles, the old clerk, who had a sincere if not a very demonstrative affection for his principal, was scarcely prevented, by a

sense of what was due to the dignity of both parties, from taking his passage down to Notting Hill to inquire.

But indeed, even had Mr Simpson made his usual appearance at his place of business that morning, it would have been too much to expect from human nature that he should have devoted himself with his old attention to ledgers and invoices. When he did arrive there towards the afternoon, the youngest clerk saw that there was "something on the governor's mind." He scarcely staid half an hour; and if his unblemished commercial repute were any longer valuable to him, it would have been undoubtedly better if he had not looked in at all; for he left the impression on the minds of his subordinates, that even the small and cautious house of Simpson & Son had not escaped in the last great commercial whirlpool; and the errand-boy, who was well up in that department of newspaper literature, gave it as his private opinion to his mother at home, that it was a "Paul & Bates" case.

But Mr Simpson was thinking little of his business, and still less what people thought of him.

"I'll go to town at once, my dear," he had said to his wife, after their first shock of surprise was over. "I'll go and see Grindles, poor John's agents, and hear what they can tell me about it; they'll be able to give me every information, of

course, and advise me as to what to do. I'll go to Grindles' at once; and I'll just look into the counting-house and set Styles's mind at rest before I come back. I can bring my letters down here to answer." (How far Styles's mind was set at rest has been already recorded.)

To Messrs Grindles' accordingly, at an unusual expense of cab-hire, Mr Simpson proceeded. If he had any floating doubts in his mind before as to the correctness of the announcement in the 'Times,' the remarkably grave and polite manner in which the junior Mr Grindle (whom he remembered hitherto as a rapid and somewhat supercilious young man) received him on his entrance, would have gone far to remove them. "Have you heard anything lately of my cousin, Mr John?" asked Mr Simpson, with a voice which he felt was nervous and unsteady—that, however, was becoming under the supposed circumstances.

"Sit down, I beg, my dear sir,—pray sit down; sorry to say we have, very sorry indeed. Have you seen this, my dear sir?" producing a copy of the 'Homeward Mail,' and pointing to a paragraph containing the same brief but important words as those which had caught the eyes of the Simpsons.

"I saw it in the 'Times' this morning, and came to you to hear more about it. He was coming home, I fancy, this month?"

"He was," said Mr Grindle; "he wrote us by

last mail to say we might expect him by the Formosa, which brought the mails, as I understand, yesterday: he had taken his passage in her, he says in this letter. We were just going to telegraph down to Plymouth, to know if she has landed her passengers, and whether your poor cousin is among them. I should fear there can be doubt of the correctness of this sad news — most sad, indeed, and sudden; but we shall have an answer to-night, and will at once let you know. You are aware, of course," continued Mr Grindle, delicately, "that you are your cousin's representative?"

"I am aware of it, sir," said Mr Simpson, bowing awkwardly, "I assure you——"

"Of course, my dear sir, of course these considerations are premature. I trust, I do most sincerely trust, that we may have some intelligence of our valued friend by the Formosa. You may depend upon our making the most particular inquiries, and giving you the earliest information. Expecting him in town, we were, this very day, and now! Well Mr Simpson, life is——"

But Mr Grindle felt himself hardly equal to the definition, and filled up his unfinished sentence by lifting up his eyes and hands. "But allow me to offer you——"

"Nothing in the world, thank you"—and so they parted.

It was not natural that Mr Simpson should

either feel or affect much sorrow for the death of a cousin whom he had not seen for nearly fifteen years. Yet sometimes, on his way home, when he remembered the days when they had played together as boys, the worthy tradesman's heart reproached him for the feelings of positive elation which he was conscious of since the news of the morning. He had never thought much of the possibility of such an event as his own accession to the little Surrey estate. Mrs Simpson, it is true, had been fond at all times of descanting, even before their acquaintances, on her children's future "expectations," not altogether to her husband's satisfaction; he had no notion, as he said, of teaching the young folks to set themselves up above their father and mother, which the younger daughter, Augusta, was rather inclined to do. And it was not without some little misgiving that he contemplated, during his solitary ride home, some of the possible effects of the change in their position upon the female members of his household. Still it is very pleasant to feel one's self independent. The Simpsons were by no means rich;—the son had succeeded the father in a long-established but not very lucrative business, and had neither the means nor the energy to extend it. He had had his anxieties and losses, and he was fond of ease and quiet. To drop unexpectedly into a thousand a-year was, he confessed to himself, a piece of good fortune almost

bewildering. If he and Mrs Simpson sent the young folks to bed early that night (to Miss Augusta's great dudgeon), and sat over the fire themselves somewhat later than usual, discussing their future prospects, they are not to be set down as more greedy and selfish than their neighbours.

Again at nine o'clock exactly the following morning, did the 'bus which Mr Simpson usually patronised go to town without him: and an aspiring young banker's clerk, who lived close by, usurped from that time forward the well-known corner-seat, which had belonged by a prescriptive right, willingly recognised by other passengers, to the "highly respectable old city gent" from No. 4. For Mr Simpson himself, at that hour, was busy reading to Mrs S., for the second time, the following important communication from Messrs Grindle:

"Dear Sir,—On receipt of telegraphic message yesterday evening, informing us that no such passenger as 'Mr John Simpson' had arrived per steamer Formosa, we despatched a clerk at once per night mail to make further inquiries. He has just returned, and brings word that Mr John Simpson had engaged his passage by that vessel, and that some of his luggage is now actually on board. He had himself, as it appeared, left Tranquebar for Point de Galle some weeks previously; and the Ceylon papers, put on board the Formosa just be-

fore sailing, contained the intelligence of his death. We shall write by this mail to our correspondents in both places, and obtain all particulars. Meantime you may command our best advice and assistance.—Faithfully yours," &c.

The breakfast at No 4 that morning was little more than a nominal meal to any of the party except Master Samuel. Either his imagination was less lively, or his appetite less liable to be affected by his feelings. Mrs Simpson and Augusta were in a state of mind abhorrent from the coarse but comfortable substantials before them. Mr Simpson played with his knife and fork, but allowed his rasher to grow cold before him untasted. After Messrs Grindle's letter had been discussed, they had been rather a silent party. The first dreams of sudden affluence were too vague and luxuriant to shape into words. The ladies were in a little fairy-land of their own, in which visions of smart carriages and unlimited millinery flashed before the eyes of their fancy. The husband felt, on the whole, almost as much puzzled as pleased. He had not yet succeeded in combining, to his own satisfaction, the proprietorship of Barton End—so uncle Sam's country-house was named—with the warehouses in Aldermanbury. A snug place down at Wandsworth, or any other favourite locality a few miles out of town, where he might

have run down every day to dinner, and spent his Sundays with an old friend or two for company—this had long been an object of innocent ambition with him, and a favourite castle-in-the-air when he was in the mood for that kind of building, which, to do him justice, was but seldom. If ever he had been inclined to trespass on the tenth commandment, it was as often as he passed a certain smart new villa on the Harrow Road, belonging to a retired tobacconist of his acquaintance, where the pillars at the entrance-gate represented two enormous cigars, and which bore the name of Havannah Cottage. That was very much Mr Simpson's pattern of rural elegance and felicity. "I should like such a little place as Snuffson's very well," had been the nearest approach to enthusiastic admiration which he had ever been heard to utter with regard to that or any other of the numerous snug retreats of British industry which he and Mrs Simpson noticed in their summer-evening drives; but it had been repeated more than once, and was evidently a pet dream of his. Mrs Simpson's ambition had always been on a grander scale, and more comprehensive in its objects; indeed, it had varied from the possession of Buckingham Palace, Life Guards included, to the occupation of No. 1 in their own terrace, which had a second drawing-room and plate-glass windows. Either sphere, she felt, she could adorn; meanwhile she was content to make an excellent wife in her

present contracted orbit. An excellent wife, as Simpson often said to himself and to his city friends in his social confidences. Did she not insist upon his always wearing worsted hose and flannel waistcoats from a given date which was assumed as the beginning of winter? And if the peculiar irritability of Mr Simpson's skin made this style of clothing especially disagreeable to him, could that be laid to her charge? Was he to catch cold, and risk his precious life, because he "didn't like the feel" of what was good for him? All Mr Simpson's shirts were made at home, either by her own hands or by those of her daughters. They did not cost much less, that was admitted; the collars—being made after an old and approved pattern belonging to Mrs Simpson's papa, treasured up as a sort of standard of what a collar should be—did, as Mr Simpson averred, cut him under the ears, and double over behind: but Mr Simpson had a short neck, which was certainly no fault either of Mrs S.'s or the collars. She put the cayenne pepper, to which Mr S. was rather addicted, carefully out of reach at dinner-time—it was so bad for his digestion; she woke him up ruthlessly from his after-dinner nap—those things grew upon people, and were very bad for a man of his full habit. She hid his snuff-box, banished his old "down-at-heel" slippers and worked him a smart tight pair instead; and, in short, tried as far as possible to keep him in the way in which

he should go. Mr Simpson, it must be said, was ungrateful for some of these attentions, and evaded her well-meant efforts with a perverse ingenuity. He continually ignored or disputed the date of resuming the flannel and worsted, wore the new slippers down at heel, kept snuff in his waistcoat pocket, and had gradually acquired the faculty of sleeping, like a fish, with his eyes open. But Simpson was the best-tempered man in the world; and he and his wife, in spite of these little antagonistic peculiarities, might almost have been claimants for the flitch at Dunmow. He had a quiet will of his own, too, in more important matters, which the lady, content with acknowledged sovereignty in what she considered her own departments of government, had sense enough seldom to try to interfere with. They had two daughters—Mary, the eldest, who had been to a good school, and was now on a visit to a maiden aunt at Brixton, and who was tacitly admitted to be rather the father's pet—having a good deal of his quiet good sense, and a very sweet disposition; and Augusta, who had never left home, and might be considered to have adopted more entirely her mother's tastes and manners. In Master Samuel, the only son, now about twelve, the hopes of both parents were alike centred; and his going to school had been delayed from time to time—to that young gentleman's disadvantage, a stranger might have thought—first

upon one pretext and then another, partly because of the expense, but in fact chiefly because neither father nor mother could make up their minds to part with him. There were moments, no doubt, when some unusual fit of troublesomeness caused sentence of immediate deportation to be passed; but it had never been put into execution: and Sam went on picking up such scraps of learning—good and evil—as the little suburban day-school offered.

"You'll give up the business, of course, Simpson?" said the wife after a pause, following up one of her own trains of thought.

"No, Sally; I think not," quietly replied the husband.

Mrs Simpson had been thinking not, too, in her own mind, and had not much hope of any other answer when she put the question. And she had very little confidence in her own powers of persuasion on this point, though she did follow up the attack by remarking, that she saw no reason why he should go on slaving all his life when they couldn't want the money. Mr Simpson "wasn't above his business," and didn't call it slaving; and as to wanting the money, everybody wanted money, as far as he saw: he meant everything to go on in the City just as usual.

"Law, Pa, what ever for?" asked the energetic Augusta.

"For a good many reasons," replied her father. And that young lady, having also an instinctive suspicion that he meant what he said, relapsed into silence, as the servant entered to clear the table; for they had sat long though they had said little. And Mr Simpson went off, an hour later than usual, to Aldermanbury.

The wife and daughter hardly felt inclined to settle themselves to their work-baskets as usual after breakfast, and Samuel had given himself a whole holiday in honour of an event which as yet he scarcely comprehended, and had begun to tease his sister to tell him all about it, when there came a ring at the bell, and Augusta, looking out of the parlour window which fully commanded all the approaches, announced the early visitor to be their neighbour, old Mr Burrows of No. 6. He was a good-natured gossiping old bachelor, who had retired on a competency from a business of his own of some kind—it appears to be hardly etiquette in Portland Terrace to inquire into particulars on such points—and occupied his leisure hours at present in making himself master, as far as possible, of the business of other people. Not that there was a spice of ill-nature either in his curiosity or his gossip, but he liked, as he observed, to know what was going on; and it was wonderful what trouble he gave himself about his neighbours' affairs—what clever plots and plans he laid for other people,

and what very little thanks he got for it. He would have done anything in the world to oblige his friends the Simpsons, except let them alone. His interference, however, was never resented: in fact, he was looked upon as a privileged friend of the family; and no one was surprised or annoyed at his early visit. The derangement in Mr Simpson's usual movements had not escaped his neighbour's busy perceptions, of course; for Mr Burrows spent a good deal of his time in looking out of his window, and in holding conversations with his housekeeper, who kept him excellently well informed of all the doings in the Terrace. Samuel, who was very fond of the old gentleman (an unrequited attachment, as it appeared), danced round him on his entrance with unusual glee.

"Well, my little man, good morning, good morning," said Mr Burrows in the passage, soothing Master Samuel's antics as one would a restive horse —"we seem very lively here; what's going on, eh?"

"Oh! Papa's cousin John's dead, and we're all so glad!"

"Sam, come here, you shocking boy!" screamed Augusta, always prompt in a difficulty, for Mrs Simpson was aghast and speechless at this abrupt statement of the circumstances; and she rushed into the passage, and seized and shook the offender vigorously.

"What's that for?" said Samuel rebelliously,

while Mr Burrows tried to mediate—"A'nt I to tell Mr Burrows, then?"

"For shame, sir," said his mother; "is that the way to speak of your poor cousin's death?" And having duly welcomed her visitor, she proceeded to discriminate, not very lucidly, between cause and effect. A relative of her husband's *was* dead—very suddenly: that, of course, was very shocking. Some family property had thereby come to them; which, with their rising family, was of course very acceptable.

It was undeniable; Mr Burrows said "Of course."

"And I hope," said the kind-hearted old gentleman, after a few little inquiries as to the probable amount of their new fortune, and other circumstances which the lady was almost as glad to communicate as he was to learn—"I hope this will smooth matters a little for my young friends, you know—eh, my dear Mrs Simpson?"

Mrs Simpson looked embarrassed. It was not because she did not know to what young friends Mr Burrows alluded, or that there was any mystery in the matter, in spite of that gentleman's attempt at a wink. But it was the very last subject she wished to converse upon just at this time.

"Augusta, my love," said she, "just put on your bonnet—that's a dear—and go and ask how old Mrs Manson is; we never sent there all day yesterday,

my head was so full of other things, and it's really quite unneighbourly."

Miss Augusta having been easily disposed of by this means—the more easily as the subject had long lost its novelty for her, and she did not therefore think it worth her while to make resistance—Mrs Simpson, having gained also a little time to think, proceeded to reply to her visitor's last question; or rather to lead him off from it so as to avoid, if possible, giving any reply to it at all.

Her daughter Mary, to whom Mr Burrows' little speech alluded, had lately become possessed of that delightful but dangerous plaything—a lover. There was nothing very romantic about the attachment, which might in part account for the fact that the course of their love, which was very true and honest, had hitherto run perfectly smooth, though there seemed a good many windings in prospect before it could hope to reach the ocean of matrimony. A very fine young fellow was George Harrison; looking, and walking, and speaking as much like a gentleman as if he had spent his early years at Eton and Oxford, instead of passing at once from Highgate school into his uncle's counting-house. His uncle and Mr Simpson were old friends; and he was also distantly related to Mr Burrows, with whom he—and consequently Mary—was an especial favourite. Not that Mary required anything beyond her own sweet thoughtful face and winning

manners to make her a favourite with most of her acquaintances, old and young. There had been no talk of marriage at present; both were young enough to wait, and, as yet, found the waiting very pleasant. Friends on both sides were propitious; or, at any rate, though perfectly aware of the state of affairs, had interposed no sort of objection; and it seemed tacitly understood that in two or three years' time or so, when some opening offered to enable George to do something for himself, he would come forward manfully and claim Mary for himself "for better for worse," without any very formidable discussion about settlements. Nothing had been seen of him in Portland Terrace for the last fortnight, which had been naturally accounted for by the fact of Mary's being absent on a visit to her aunt at Brixton. Aunt Martha was the kindest creature in the world—none the less kind in such cases because her own youth had been sad and disappointed—and if she could not fairly attribute George Harrison's frequent visits and thoughtful little presents to her own attractions, she was well content to play the part of wall between the young Pyramus and Thisbe.

But their "Lion" too, poor young souls, was already roaring in the distance, and from a very unexpected quarter. A very gentle beast too it might have been thought. But uncle Sam's property, which had brought the flutterings of so

much pleasure in anticipation to the rest of the Simpson household, had a root of bitterness in store for poor Mary and her lover. So there were some persons at all events who were likely to be sincere mourners, though, like many other mourners, they had but selfish reasons, for "poor cousin John."

When Augusta had closed the door, her mother resumed the interrupted conversation.

"Oh! you mean that flirtation between George Harrison and Mary, I suppose. Well, I haven't heard much about it lately, do you know?"

"Flirtation! my dear ma'am, why, arn't they engaged to be married?"

"They never told me so, I assure you, Mr Burrows." It was true to the very letter.

"No—nor they never told me so either, Mrs Simpson; but I suspect they have told each other so, over and over again. You don't mean to say anything has gone wrong between them after all?"

"Nothing whatever that I know of, Mr Burrows," rejoined the lady in her coldest and driest tone; "Mary's far too young to think about marrying yet, and me and Mr Simpson object to long engagements."

There was something so unusually dignified in Mrs Simpson's tone, that poor Mr Burrows, who was no match for any woman in a conversation of this nature, for some moments could only look at

her with astonishment; but he concluded at last that her prospective riches had refined her philosophy, though without improving her grammar. He was much too honest and simple-minded himself to suspect the change which such a prospect could effect in two days in her maternal feelings.

"The fact is, my dear Mr Burrows," continued the lady, shrugging her shoulders and putting on a confidential air, "there has been, as we all know, a little—a little nonsense going on between them, as there always will be amongst young people, but nothing really serious on either side, I fancy."

A little nonsense! nothing serious! Why, Mr Burrows himself had joked and poked them many a time at certain snug little suppers which were wont to take place both at No. 4 and No. 6, Mrs Simpson herself being present, and laughing heartily; and there she sat before him now looking the very picture of cool and unembarrassed innocence, while poor Mr Burrows felt himself colouring with modest shame and indignation. It was interesting to see the progress Mrs Simpson was making in the duties of her new position. It was an awkward interview, but she was going through it wonderfully, and so she thought herself.

"You know, Mr Burrows, in this world young people can't marry without money."

"They can't marry in the other world even with it, I suppose, ma'am; but I thought now the money

was come." He was beginning to suspect the real workings of the mother's mind, and was more abrupt and less polite than usual.

"Oh, Mary mustn't look to her father for anything at present; there's no ready money, and a deal to be done on the property; our daughters won't be heiresses, indeed, Mr Burrows;" but Mrs Simpson could not resist a gratified smile at the notion.

"George wasn't looking for an heiress when he fixed upon your Mary, Mrs Simpson; he would scorn to marry any girl for her money; but he's good enough for the biggest heiress in England, George is; ay, and many a one would be glad enough to have him, ma'am, without a farthing, that they would! But as you say, ma'am, young folks can't marry without something to begin the world with; and all I know is, if I had had a fort'n left me, and Miss Mary were my daughter, I'd spend half of it to make her happy, ma'am, that's what I would!"

"Ah, my good sir, how easy it is for you to talk who have no children, and can't feel as I do!" And the smile now took the character of triumphant superiority, which could afford to pity.

It is a valuable and unanswerable argument against all bachelors. What can they know about it? Mr Burrows gave in, foiled, but indignant. It had been foretold to him in the days of his

youth, by a gypsy fortune-teller, that he should listen to a tall fair lady, who should speak him fair, and turn out a dark deceiver. "Beware of her!" had been the ominous words, and he had walked in fear and trembling in the presence of all such enchantresses all the days of his life. And now the prophecy seemed in the way of being fulfilled, like all prophecies, in the most unlooked-for manner: to be sure the lady now before him was not tall, but she was fair, and that was quite as close an interpretation as such fulfilments admit of. He wished Mrs Simpson "a very good morning," refused to listen to the syren voice which she put on to soothe and stay him, and left her rather disconcerted with her own success, for she had no desire to offend him.

"Confound her for a covetous old sinner!" was Mr Burrows's explosion within his own breast as he stamped energetically along the terrace. "So she thinks her daughters may look higher, now they've come into this bit of money, and means to throw poor George over! I'll give him a hint, though, of what he's got to expect, and hang me if he shan't be beforehand with them in crying off: I won't have him jilted by any such rubbish!"

By the time, however, that he got a mile from his own door—for he was much too indignant to go in and sit down—and had cooled himself in that labyrinth of muddy fields and unfinished houses

north of Notting Hill, beyond the knowledge even of cabs and policemen, called by the residents, for some mysterious reason, Kensington Park, he began to think within himself that the term "rubbish" could not apply with any degree of fitness to his favourite Mary Simpson. If the mother was spoiled by a little sudden prosperity, it was no reason the daughter should be. "George wouldn't have given *her* up," he thought, "not if he'd been left a million!" And why should the girl be less honest than he was? So Mr Burrows resolved, with a very wise and unusual self-denial, to let things take their course for the present, and to smother his knowledge of Mrs Simpson's baseness as he best might, within his own breast.

Mary came home from her aunt's the next day, and heard the news of the unexpected change in the family fortunes with so little outward emotion as to disappoint very considerably her sister and mother, both of whom thought to have had the pleasure of overwhelming her by the magnificence of their announcement. Perhaps one reason for her taking it so quietly was, that at the moment she did not connect it in the least with her engagement with George Harrison; for engaged they had been for the last six months, as Mrs Simpson was perfectly well aware — though certainly she had received no formal notification of the fact— and therefore thought herself quite justified in pro-

fessing ignorance to Mr Burrows. Perhaps Mary thought of George so much, that everything which did not directly refer to him seemed to her of little importance. Girls are so foolish sometimes. She felt very glad on her father's account; she remembered once, when she was but a child, and some little difficulty about money had occurred, as such things will occur in the trading community even to the most prudent, that he had said to her mother in her hearing, "Ah, Sally, if I had but a thousand pounds!" and how much she had wished some one would give her a thousand pounds to give him, and wondered whether she could ever save so much out of her monthly allowance of half-a-crown, by being more careful in the matter of boot-laces; and now he would have a thousand pounds every year! She wished some of it had come then; for she had dim and painful recollections of her mother crying, and her father walking about the room instead of eating his supper, and of herself going to bed with a heavy and puzzled heart, after a long kiss from him which she knew by instinct had as much sorrow as love in it. If she asked him more questions when he came home from the City that evening about Barton End, and whether he had ever been there, and what sort of a place it was, and when he meant to go and live there, than even Mrs Simpson or Augusta had yet asked, it was not because Mary was more curious or more

impatient than the others, or because the thought of their new wealth was more delightful to her, or because she was as tired as her mother and sister had suddenly professed themselves, of living "poked up in London" (perhaps she had her private reasons to the contrary); but because these were new and pleasant sources of a common interest between her father and herself, which she felt after all she could enter into much more heartily than his usual topics of conversation, which had seldom gone beyond the dry details of the rise and fall of markets, or the last commercial gossip from the City. Poor Mary had often confessed, rather to the annoyance of her family, that she had not much natural taste for shop-craft, and had always found herself much more congenially occupied in aunt Martha's quiet cottage at Brixton, where there were books, and flowers, and old songs which she was never tired of singing, or her aunt of hearing. In fact Mary, though almost unconsciously to herself, and certainly not admitted to such distinction by either mother or sister, was quite the lady of the family. Mr Simpson felt it every day, though he could not have put it into words; and his own honest but uncultivated mind warmed and opened with a strange but not unusual attraction to his elder daughter's influence. His wife complained on this very evening, not without some truth, that Mary had got more out of her father in a few minutes than she and

Augusta had arrived at in all their cross-examination of him since the news came. For Mr Simpson had actually, for a few weeks in his boyhood, been a dweller in this paradise (for such the Surrey country-house had become in their vivid imaginations), and could remember all about it, they were sure, if he chose.

"My loves, I don't remember much about it; I was only a boy, you know (and that's a long while ago, Sally); but I do remember poor uncle Sam was very kind, and it was a very nice place to me after London streets, as you may suppose. I can recollect, as well as if it was yesterday, galloping the old pony about the park."

"There, Pa," screamed Augusta; "you never told us before that there was a park! Oh, what a beautiful place it must be!"

"It was called a park, my dear, but it was only a field: it had been a larger place once, I believe, but there was nothing very grand about it in uncle Sam's days."

"And shall I have a pony to ride, Pa?" asked Samuel.

"You shall go to school at all events, my boy," said his father, looking at him rather thoughtfully.

This was a view of his inheritance not altogether so gratifying to Master Samuel; though his sister, to whom he had been more than usually trouble-

some that morning, expressed her emphatic opinion, that it would "do him a deal of good."

"And Augusta must have a governess to finish her, like Miss 'Obbs," said the mother.

"La, mother!" exclaimed Augusta, who considered herself a much more finished article, in every respect, than Miss Hobbs, in spite of that young lady's superior advantages; but as there was something in the proposal which sounded grand, she made no serious opposition to it.

Mary silently congratulated herself that she was too old to be finished; and then for the first time it struck her that their improved circumstances might have some effect upon her own prospects. It was a very pleasant idea; and she began to indulge little day-dreams on her own account of all that money might do. It need not be said that she kept them carefully to herself, or that they would scarcely have harmonised with Mrs Simpson's.

Sam was sent to school; and Mr Simpson, after one or two further interviews with the Messrs Grindles, went down, by advice of those gentlemen, and in company with the junior of the firm, to Barton End; not, of course, as yet to take possession, but from a very natural wish to renew at once his acquaintance with the old place of which he was soon to be the actual master, and to inform the old servants, who had been left in charge, of

his cousin's death, and his own succession. Mr John Simpson had inherited the estate at his uncle's death, about five years back, while he himself was engaged in his duties abroad, and it had been a matter of surprise that he had not at once returned to take possession. But old associations are strong; and he found Eastern habits had become agreeable to him. His agents duly remitted his rents. He was enabled, with the income of his consulship, to live almost regally, and in a position of some little importance, where he was, and perhaps felt rather shy of returning, an illiterate man, with foreign tastes and ideas, to risk a supercilious welcome from the Surrey squires. So he put off his coming home from year to year, until his friends made up their minds he would never come at all; and then the ship that was to have brought him, brought instead the news of his death. The house had never been disturbed since the uncle's death; his old domestics were still in possession, and were never interfered with, except by an occasional visit for a day or two from the Messrs Grindles, who managed the estate. Whether Mr John or Mr Joseph Simpson arrived at last to take possession, made therefore as little difference to any party, except themselves, as could possibly be conceived.

It had been Mrs Simpson's wish to have accompanied her husband on this pleasant voyage of discovery; but that was a step which he himself

by no means approved of; and as the Messrs Grindles gave it also as their opinion that such a visit would be rather premature—in fact, that it would hardly look well—that lady, who was a stanch maintainer of decorum in all its branches, gave way at once. And if her proposal, in any degree, savoured of undue haste to step into the dead cousin's shoes, she hastened amply to atone for it, by ordering the deepest and most expensive mourning for the whole Portland Terrace establishment. It would no doubt have gratified the feelings of the late Mr John in the highest degree, and have almost reconciled him to his fortunate representatives, if he could have overlooked his sorrowing relative giving directions to her milliner to have "everything of the very best, and just as if it was for a brother," and have felt the thickness of the silks, and measured the depth of the crape.

So, leaving Mrs Simpson thus dutifully engaged, her husband went down into Surrey with the junior Mr Grindle in his dog-cart. You might have called Mr Grindle a bad lawyer, and he would only have laughed at you, or even have taken it as a compliment; but to have questioned his driving would have been to make an enemy of him for life. The mare was skittish, and the worthy citizen felt or fancied himself in peril of an overthrow more than once, and inwardly resolved not to include a vehicle of that description in his list of necessaries for a

country gentleman's establishment. But as he had the prudence to confine his fears to himself, and risking no remark upon the subject beyond the unobjectionable observation that the mare was "very fresh," they arrived at Barton End quite safely, and on excellent terms with each other.

"We must stay here two or three days," said the lawyer. "I haven't been able to get down here for some time, and there are a good many things to be looked into; and of course I should like, while we are here, to show you over the estate: besides, I've asked a friend to meet me here for a day's shooting; generally get a couple of good days here in the course of the year; your cousin, Mr John, you see, always left me that privilege—can't say how it's to be in future, you know, of course," continued Mr Grindle, with what he meant for a sort of deferential smile, but accompanied with a gentle nudge which might have struck any one but Mr Simpson as rather familiar. But Mr Grindle knew his man, and had an eye to securing the agency as well as the shooting.

"Oh! I am sure, I hope—I beg by all means—if I'm ever in that position, I mean, and if you were good enough to do my little business for me——"

"Time enough, my dear sir, to talk about those things; at present, you understand I act for Mr *John* Simpson." Mr Grindle had perfectly satisfied himself on the point on which he had been

very properly anxious; and now he put the question by so quietly and decidedly, that poor Mr Simpson felt quite rebuked, as if he himself had very indecorously brought it forward.

"You don't shoot yourself, perhaps?" resumed the lawyer, after a decent interval, which he kindly allowed his companion for repentance and recovery.

Mr Simpson might have replied, "Do I look as if I did?" but he contented himself with a smile and a shake of the head.

"Well, I daresay you can amuse yourself if I am so uncivil as to leave you for a day; there's the mare and the cart very much at your service."

Mr Simpson bowed his acknowledgments, but without the slightest idea of interfering with the mare's retirement. He had been wishing there were an omnibus handy for his journey home; and was very glad to descend from his seat and follow Mr Grindle, who seemed quite at home, into a comfortable-looking room, with a good fire, and which had evidently been a library.

"Dinner will be ready in half an hour, gentlemen," said the old man who had ushered them in.

"And we shall be quite ready for it," said the lawyer; Mr Simpson not being prepared with a reply.

Matters were not nearly so comfortable in Port-

land Terrace. It so happened that the very evening of Mr Simpson's departure, George Harrison had run down, in more than his usually joyous spirits, with a little good news of his own for Mary. The long-hoped-for augmentation of his salary had come at last. The uncle who had taken him into his counting-house—and who was his guardian, for George had lost his father—was a strict man, and somewhat eccentric in his ways, but very just. He had a large family of his own, and though the business was extensive and lucrative, it had always been well understood that George must entertain no expectations of future partnership, as that would be the sons' inheritance. Two of them were clerks in the counting-house, and the father kept them as strictly to their desks, or rather more strictly, than any one else in the establishment. George Harrison might consider himself fortunate in occupying the position he did, which was independent and respectable; and perhaps he was even still more fortunate in having to work his own way under eyes which were not easily cheated or evaded, and where no mercy was shown to any wilful neglect. He did his best; and though his uncle had never done more than express himself as quite satisfied, he found that when a fair opportunity offered of advancing him, he was not forgotten. His cousins would no doubt in time become members of the firm, but they were young;

and George found himself now promoted to a vacancy which the father knew he was at present much better qualified to fill. It offered but a very modest income to marry upon, certainly; but Mary had no grand ideas: and George thought that even the 'Times' minimum income for young couples would bear reduction. At any rate, he ran down to Portland Terrace (eager as he was, not a sixpence would he waste in cab-hire), and rushed in very wet and very happy to rejoice and consult with Mary. Mrs Simpson was in her own room, very busy with the dressmaker; Augusta, who was a good-natured girl enough, and very fond of her sister, and willing also, no doubt, to do as she would be done by, found she had something to look after in the kitchen; though her conscience smote her afterwards for weakly allowing her feelings to interfere with her duty, having fully adopted her mother's views at a conference held the evening before, that it would be a thousand pities now, when Mary might do so well, and form an undeniable connection, "to your advantage, you know, my dear, as well," said the thoughtful mother, "for her to go and throw herself away upon that young Harrison." The coast being clear, however, Mary and her lover had a good three-quarters of an hour to themselves before Mrs Simpson knew he was in the house; and how much may be said and done in three-quarters of an hour judiciously employed! On

the stage, a whole *petite comédie*, comprehending at least two pairs of lovers and their fortunes, is performed within the time; in real life, all that is worth remembering in the long dull drama of existence, for either man or woman, is often played out in less; the rest of it—scenes, characters, and dialogue—might be all cut out without destroying the interest, if not with advantage to the lookers-on. But for the two young hearts now beating near each other (very near indeed it was) in Mrs Simpson's parlour, though without her sanction, the grand act of life had been played already, long since; it was only the winding-up of the piece which they had to settle, and that was soon done. If Mary didn't think it too little to live upon, why, George didn't. If George thought they could manage, then Mary was sure they could. In a meeting so unanimous, the resolutions do not require much discussion. The arguments are admitted on both sides; or rather, both sides are one. If any unpleasant suggestion—one of the prudence party—intrudes itself, the course is obvious—"turn him out." What means freedom of discussion on such subjects — indeed on any subject—except freedom to discuss it as much and as little as you like? Then she told him—and was glad she had not told him before—of the possibility that she might have "a little something" too. Papa would not let her come to him quite penni-

less now; and some day or other—perhaps when they most wanted it, "for their children," in her pure innocence she said—he might—she was sure he would—do all he fairly could for her. And George was almost angry with her for having anything to promise him besides herself.

Three-quarters of an hour was it? why, it did not seem five minutes. (Augusta thought the clock had stopped, for the kitchen fire was low, and Betsy was snappish, and not so much inclined for gossip as usual; *her* young man was waiting at the area steps, which accounted for a low whistle every five minutes, startling Augusta. Betsy said the cat had a cold.) Three-quarters of an hour it was though, neither more nor less, and George must go; couldn't even stay supper as usual; he would have more work to do now, and there was something to be attended to that very night; he "had rather go," and Mary did not ask him to stay. So the mischief was done, and George Harrison half-way home to his humble lodgings, before Mrs Simpson descended to supper. She was in a benignant mood, for the new gowns fitted admirably, and being what the dressmaker called "rather jolly" —which only implies that which in politer language is called well-developed proportions—she was conscious that she looked well in black. Even the announcement which Mary very innocently made at supper-time, that George had been there, neither

spoilt her temper nor her appetite; he was gone again, that was a comfort; but she would lose no time in having a talk with Mary. So when she had finished her moderate glass of rum-and-water, she was not sorry to see her younger daughter (who had not spent a satisfactory evening on the whole, having sat for what seemed to her an unconscionable time in the dark with the cross Betsy and an uneasy conscience) take up her candlestick with a yawn, and proceed to bed. Mary, too, had something to say. It was with some little misgiving—more, certainly, than she should have felt a fortnight back—that she told her mother of George's advancement, and how he had now taken courage actually to speak about their marriage. She did not feel quite sure, when she recalled certain hints and side-speeches (Mrs Simpson was great in that line) addressed during the last few days rather to Augusta than herself, about hasty engagements, and imprudent marriages, and the duty of paying due regard to the station in which people were placed, whether what she had to tell would be received quite as she could wish. While George was with her, she had seen no difficulties in the way; but now, alone with her mother, all her joy and confidence were gone. But if she spoke hesitatingly, and anticipating a somewhat colder reception for her confession than the good-humoured banter to which she had grown accustomed on this same

subject, little indeed was she prepared for the storm of anger which burst upon her. Never had Mrs Simpson been seen so angry. She was provoked with herself for having delayed her lecture to her elder daughter so long; angry with the whole household for having been accomplices in securing that important three-quarters of an hour for George and Mary's conspiracy against her; angry with the dressmaker for having come at that particular crisis—an hour behind her appointment—she must have done it on purpose; and angry beyond measure with George Harrison for having out-generaled her cherished plans by a little straightforward dealing. She had trusted more to the hope of disgusting him in time by a careful system of cold receptions, and change of manner, than to any positive effect which she expected to produce upon her daughter by hints of her improved value in the matrimonial market, or direct exhortations to make the most of her new position. George, she knew, had an honest and independent spirit; once let him feel that he was suspected of pressing his suit now because there was money in the case, and however unreasonable the accusation, his pride might take offence. Then Mary might go into the country, out of his way; and so in time, this unlucky love might go the way of many others, become one more of those little silent sacrifices laid upon the altars of wealth and pride—

mites in the estimation of a prudent public, but sometimes to the offerers more costly than "all their living"—and be gradually reduced with hymns and libations from Mrs Simpson as high-priestess, to ashes.

So at first, even now, instead of attacking Mary, she began by opening fire upon George. It was a mistake, Mrs Simpson, and as a woman you ought to have known it. In a calmer mood, you would never have made a first move so utterly destructive of your game. Mary would have taken a good amount of scolding for herself quietly; however cruel and unwarrantable she might have felt her mother's conduct to be, a few gentle expostulations and a bitter flood of tears would have been her only reply that evening. Mary and her mother might have fewer interests and feelings in common than was good for either; but there had never yet been injustice on one side, or any lack of dutiful affection on the other. But when Mrs Simpson paused for breath after an alternation of violent abuse and attempted sarcasm against George Harrison as "a low mercenary creature," having declared her own firm belief that this opportune increase of his salary was nothing but a "move" got up between himself and his uncle in order to nail the Simpsons to the point at once, she saw that Mary, though she trembled very much, had risen from her seat, and was looking at her with

a very calm and composed countenance, on which there was no symptom of a tear.

"Mother!" said the girl, "you don't mean that of George?"

Mrs Simpson did not mean it, in her heart; but she had meant to say it, and had said it; and she said it again, more violently than ever, because she felt its untruth.

"Mother!" and she laid her hand quietly on her arm—"don't say any more. If you never meant me to marry him, you should have spoken before. It's too late now, for either of us. We can't go back. Oh that this miserable money had never come between us!" For Mary saw it all now.

"You've been took in, Mary; took in by a swindler, as I may say. If I were you, I'd have more spirit, that I would."

Spirit! it was not spirit which poor Mary wanted just then. She wanted patience, which is harder to find. If the mother had never understood her daughter before, she had unlocked some startling secrets now. In the usually calm sweet face, now flashing crimson, and then changing to dead white, there was neither maiden shame nor girlish fear of her mother's anger, but burning indignation and fixed defiance. Mrs Simpson was not a wise woman, even in a worldly sense; she understood the symptoms, she was frightened, but she was not to be mastered by her own daughter, in her

own house. She was undeniably right; and like many other persons when undeniably right, she was wrong.

"Say what you will of me, mother, and I'll bear it if I can; but don't dare to slander *him!*"

"Dare! hey-day! I'll dare him to come inside my doors again, that's what I will!"

"There shall be no need, mother; I can go to him."

Both had said a good deal more now than they had meant to say. Mary's was one of those quiet answers which rather increase wrath than turn it away. Her mother's indignation stifled her words. She could only gasp out something like, "Very well, ma'am—very well!" when Mary rushed upstairs to her room, and sat down in an agony of wounded feeling, to which even a flood of tears brought no relief. It was all so sudden, so little deserved! and all because of a little money! But though she never slept that night, she lay very still and quiet, and never disturbed her sister. She had no one there who understood her, none to whom to open her grief. But her resolution was taken; and long before the family breakfast-hour she had dressed hastily, packed up quietly a few absolute necessaries out of her wardrobe, and taking them in her own hand, leaving Betsy in wide astonishment as she glided by her in the passage, she had reached the nearest cab-

stand, and asked to be driven to her aunt's at Brixton.

Aunt Martha, she thought, would give her sympathy at all events, and a little counsel for the actual present. For the future, she meant to ask no one's counsel but George's. If he would take her to him, there she was; never so wretched and miserable as now, to be sure, but never so much needing the love and care which he had so often promised. She was not ashamed of her love for him now; he had been wronged, insulted. She did not consider it was only the senseless violence of an angry woman; she would scarcely have minded rushing in to him in his uncle's presence, and crying, "George, here I am: pity me and love me; no one else will, because I love you."

She hardly knew how she got into her aunt's pretty sitting-room. She did not understand the servant, till she had told her twice that her aunt was gone from home.

"Yes, Miss, gone to nurse old Mrs Manson for two or three days, while her niece is away. Old Mrs Manson's very bad, I do suppose, Miss." Well, she must sit down, at least, and calm herself. She would write to George at once. But what to say? when could sorrow, shame, and outraged feeling ever shape themselves into the letters of any discovered alphabet? She wrote, and tried to read what she had written, and tore

it into fragments. She bent her aching head upon her hands, and waited for the troubled thoughts to still themselves. But they would not. Then she rose, and went to the window that looked out into the road. By what a merciful ordering it is, that the most trifling outward object catches the eye at such moments, and delivers us for a few instants from ourselves! A coach was passing towards the great city. It was a gentle ascent, and at the moment a boy with a very small bundle let himself gently down from behind. Not so quickly, though, but that the watchful driver caught sight of him when he reached the ground.

"Hallo, young chap!" he shouted; "fare's a shilling, if you please!"

"All right, coachman, all right!" and the boy ran off as fast as his legs would carry him.

"All right! I'm blest if it is though!—think you're going to ride all the way from Croydon here for nothing, ye young rascal?"

The driver pulled up his horses, and looked after his flying "fare" for a few seconds, as if he had a great mind to get down from his box and give chase; but as the boy was active and had a fair start, and time was probably valuable, he shouted a few good-humoured threats after him, and drove on.

Mary had looked after him too, with such utter astonishment that her own troubles were forgotten.

Her eyes had tears in them, to be sure; but there was no mistaking the personal identity of Master Samuel. She flew to the street door, and could just see his figure in the distance. The coach turned the corner in the opposite direction, and then the boy appeared to stop, and to be watching whether any one was coming in pursuit. He began slowly to retrace his steps towards the door where Mary was standing, and Mary hardly waited for him to be within reasonable distance to wave her handkerchief in the hope of attracting his attention. The movement seemed rather a suspicious one to the fugitive, for he halted and reconnoitred afresh. Mary ran towards him, unbonneted as she was, and at last Samuel recognised a friend. He was hurried into the house, and questioned as well as his sister's agitation would allow her.

Samuel had run away from school.

"I a'nt going to black Binns' boots, nor spend all my money in buying paunches to feed his dog, nor to have nuts cracked on my head with Vardy's dict'snary, nor have my tea stirred with a tallow candle, nor be locked up on a half-holiday. I cut away this morning—me and another did."

Where was he going to now, Mary asked.

"Well, I was coming here first, to see what aunt Martha'd say, and then I'm going home to mother. I rode all the way from Croydon here, you see, but I hadn't got a sixpence. Vardy said he'd skin me

if I didn't lend him all I had left, so I jumped off by here, you see, without paying; didn't I manage it prime? What'll mother say, do you think, Mary?"

Mary could have told him that Mrs Simpson was not likely at present to give him a very warm welcome. But a sudden thought had struck her. She would take Samuel with her—even he was a sort of protection, and a fellow-culprit—and go down at once to her father at Barton End. She would tell him everything, and follow his advice faithfully, for he would never urge her to give up George.

Samuel was delighted with the proposal; Mrs Simpson's moods were uncertain with all her family, and it was quite a matter of speculation with him during his flight, whether she would kiss and pity him on his arrival, or send him to bed in preparation for the early coach back to the hated school in the morning. And to go down to Barton End!—it was worth running away for, even if the master flogged him (he couldn't think Vardy really meant to skin him) when he was sent back. The old pony might be living in the park still, possibly. Of course he should like to go to Barton End.

It was ascertained upon inquiry that a coach would pass in the afternoon, which would set down Mary and her brother soon after dark within a mile of the house. Samuel was in terror lest the coachman should be his old acquaintance of the morning;

but even he should be propitiated, Mary assured him, by an extra shilling. The boy's company had already done her good. She listened to all his school troubles, and promised, that if he went back, and was a good boy, the absolute power of Binns and Vardy should be modified. It was strange, Mary thought, that even these boys should begin thus early to torment each other; she wondered whether there was any happiness anywhere in this world! Samuel was ravenously hungry, having run away without his breakfast, which reminded Mary that she had done the same: appetite is very infectious, and she was indebted to his example for not refusing entirely, as she felt very much disposed to do, the extempore luncheon which aunt Martha's maid was quite ashamed of, but which Master Simpson pronounced to be "prime." Mary wrote a hasty note to Augusta, to say she was gone to her father, and rather longer ones, not nearly so intelligible, to George and to her aunt, and took her seat in the coach with a sinking heart. It was a miserable journey, this looked-for visit to Barton End; she dreaded the very sight of the place. What would her poor father say? Mary had never given him one moment's trouble. He had been fond of saying so to her, when they were alone; she was his heart's pride and delight. He would think her right, she was sure; but must she be the wretched instrument of breaking up all his

family happiness? Still, she never hesitated or repented for one instant. She must be true to George. She would never have suffered herself to think of him—would have smothered her first feelings towards him as she might, had either father or mother forbidden their intimacy; would give him up even now, if he was—what he had been called that morning. So she stepped out in the dark evening on the strange road where the turn to Barton was, with a weak and tottering step, but with as strong a heart as when she had said to her mother, "I can go to him."

It was a long lonely mile to Barton End, but a straight road, the coachman had said, and she had famous company. For Samuel had begged to go outside, and for the last few miles had sat on the box, had heard wondrous tales of horses, and taken the coachman into his confidence as to his running away, and informed him of his prospective ownership of Barton End, and, in short, talked in such magnificent style as must have abashed Binns & Co. for ever, could they but have heard him. But he was very quiet now,—partly from some misgivings as to the meeting with his father, and partly because Mary clasped his hand so tight, and trembled so, and walked so very fast, and then stopped for breath, that Samuel was rather frightened. He little knew that in the eyes of the world poor Mary was by far the greater culprit of the

two. He began again at this last moment, as he had done before during the day, to try to enlist her on his side against the offended powers.

"I say, Polly dear, say a good word for me; don't let 'em send me back again straight, as they did one boy, and they kept him on bread and water for a week, and flogged him twice every day, and he went and drowned himself, and there's his bones plain in the well now, and his ghost comes up every Saturday night in the bucket."

"Don't talk such nonsense, Sam," said his sister, though she scarcely heard the words.

"Well, but Vardy told me so, and he showed me something white down in the water, and told me to go and draw the bucket up on a Saturday night, but I durstn't."

Possibly the increasing gloom of the lane had its effect on Samuel's nerves, which were not of the strongest; however, they reached the entrance to the house without difficulty or adventure.

Mr Grindle had returned from a long day's shooting, and found Mr Simpson awaiting him at a late dinner; rather moped, if the truth must be told, and longing to be at home at tea with his family. The lawyer's sporting friend had declined to stay and dine with them, and had driven back to town; so the two gentlemen again sat down *tête-à-tête*, Mr Grindle doing the honours. Mr Simpson found his position rather embarrassing; he was neither master

nor guest. He was drinking the agent's wine kept at Barton under private lock and key in preparation for his periodical visits, and eating the salmon brought down in ice in his dog-cart. He would not have ventured himself to give an order in the house for the world. Mr Grindle, it is true, referred to him continually, most distinctly and pointedly, as "poor Mr John's cousin;" but he felt that the sour-looking old servant would, at a word from that gentleman, have kicked him out of the front door, and, as he fancied, with pleasure. It was quite true—so he would; and Mr Grindle after him, and Mr John Simpson, if he had the chance, after them both, or any other visitor by right or by invitation, who interfered with his own personal ease and quiet; but to poor Mr Joseph it seemed that the sour looks were levelled specially at him.

It might be that both gentlemen were tired, or that they did not find each other's conversation very agreeable, or that, as the lawyer observed, there was something sleepy in the air; for, after a very languid attempt at conversation, they forgot to pass the bottle, and fell fast asleep in their respective easy-chairs. They were roused by a startling peal from the hall bell (nervous hands always pull hard) echoing loudly through the almost empty house.

"Rather late for a visitor," said Mr Grindle;

"hope none of my clients have followed me down here."

The hall-door was opened, there was a preliminary negotiation audible in the passage, and then the sour-visaged domestic ushered in "Miss Simpson." Mr Grindle looked astonished, as he rose and bowed. Mr Simpson jumped up in alarm. "Anything the matter at home, Mary?" said the father in a trembling voice.

She forgot Mr Grindle; perhaps never saw him. She rushed forward, and fell on her knees with one loud sob at her father's feet.

Perhaps Mr Grindle could not, strictly speaking, have been called a gentleman. He was a man, at all events, which is sometimes just as good. He was astonished, he was very pardonably curious, but he walked straight out of the room. It was a case, as he would have phrased it, quite out of his line of business. He walked straight out, rather in a hurry, and the passage was rather dark. There he stumbled over a boy. "Who are you?" said he, shaking him rather roughly, by way of giving vent to his agitated feelings—"who the deuce are you?"

"Don't," said a pleading voice — "don't; I'm Sam."

"Sam who?"

"Sam Simpson."

"Curse it," said the lawyer, "here's the whole

family come. And what on earth are you doing here, boy, skulking in the passage? If you want to see your father, why don't you go to him?"

"Oh! 'cause I've ran away; and she's gone to tell him about Binns."

"Ran away? where from? and why did you run here? and who's Binns?"

But if there had been any hope, in his then state of agitation, of Samuel's giving intelligible answers to this sharp fire of questions, he was at all events spared the trial, for at that moment the hall bell went again, as loudly as before.

"Go it," said Mr Grindle, with a sort of sneering defiance; "ring louder."

Samuel had not the slightest doubt that the Philistines were upon him — that the whole staff of Lindley House, professors of all branches, native Parisians and Germans, drawing, writing, fencing, and calisthenic masters (most of whom he had never seen, but they looked terrible in the prospectus), with Binns and Vardy probably as volunteers, were baying on his track, and that he was to be dragged back to increased tortures.

"Let go my coat-tails, sir." (Sam had fastened on him in his agony.) "What's the matter with the boy? don't howl in that way! go to your father, d'ye hear?—Sorry to keep you waiting, I'm sure," said the lawyer, again addressing the door with a bitter politeness; for either the old servant was

slow, or the new visitor impatient, and there was another peal along the passages. Sam was under the hall table now. The old servant came across the hall, looking sourer than ever.

"More company, Zachary," said Mr Grindle; "are your beds all aired?" Zachary's face might have expressed disgust, but that was its usual expression, and he was too much afraid of the lawyer to reply, or, perhaps, too intensely indignant.

He opened the door, however, and a tall young man inquired for Mr Joseph Simpson.

"Your name, sir, if you please," said Zachary. It must have been a great satisfaction to him to answer by a counter-question, for the gentleman was evidently impatient.

"Mr Harrison." Zachary vouchsafed no verbal answer, but allowed him to walk in. George caught sight of Mr Grindle as he was retreating, and addressed his next question to him.

"I beg your pardon, sir, but you no doubt can tell me—is Mary—is Miss Simpson here with her father?"

"Well," said the lawyer, after taking a rapid survey of his questioner, which appeared satisfactory, for there was something less of irritation in his tone—"I think I may say she is. Has *she* run away?"

"Sir!" said George, firing up.

"Oh! no offence, I beseech you; but really the

family movements are rather puzzling. You see this young gentleman—eh! what's become of him now?"

Reassured by George Harrison's well-known voice, Samuel took courage to emerge from under the table.

George looked, if possible, more puzzled than Mr Grindle. "Well," said the latter, in a tone that implied he gave the thing up altogether, "I think I'll go to bed—give me a candle, Zachary. You'll find Mr Simpson in there."

Mary had laid all her griefs before her father. Her mother's violence was not so overwhelming to him as it had been to her. He was more really vexed, though he did not say so, at Mary's imprudent step than at his wife's foolish language; a few hasty words more or less would have made very little impression upon good-humoured Mr Simpson. But he was not in love, had not heard blasphemy spoken against his idol, as poor Mary had. He soothed and comforted her as well as he could, though he was sadly at a loss for words; it would all come right by-and-by. At all events Mary and George had his consent, and they must be patient; but he ended by wishing with her that cousin John's property had gone somewhere else. "We wasn't rich, Mary, but we was very comfortable as we was."

"Oh yes, dear father, oh yes!" and Mary began to sob again, though the tears were not so bitter; when she started at the sound of a voice and a step

in the hall, and grew as pale again as marble. Why was it, that when George entered the room, she turned from him and hid her face on her father's shoulder, instead of flying into his arms for shelter as she had longed to do a few hours ago!

He had left town the instant he received her note—so hurried and incoherent that he scarcely gathered more from it than that she was in trouble, and that he should find her with her father at Barton End. Had she asked him to come to her?—she could not remember now: had she done wrong?—she began to fear it now. Mr Simpson held out his hand at once, with the old cordial greeting, "George, my boy!" Indeed, he was delighted to see him, and would have transferred his daughter at once to one who was probably more at home, or at least had more modern experience, in such scenes than himself; but Mary clung close, and never looked up or spoke.

Again the hall bell rang; not so loud this time; but Harrison had left the dining-room door open, and Sam, once more in a state of alarm, rushed in to his bewildered parent, and exclaimed, "Oh, father, father! here's a carriage drove up!"

"I'll bet a shilling," said Mr Simpson, "it's your mother, Polly! Never mind, my girl, cheer up, cheer up."

Mary looked up, and put her hand in George's. Nobody thought of Sam; but he felt great comfort

at the suggestion. Chains and bolts were withdrawn, amidst audible mutterings from Zachary. It was not a lady's voice; it was not Mrs Simpson, for Samuel rushed out to see, and came back looking more scared than ever. Old Zachary looked into the room, with a hideous smile, and announced very distinctly—

MR JOHN SIMPSON!

A stout, dark-complexioned, but good-humoured-looking man walked full into the middle of the room, and bowed comprehensively to all the party, with something of foreign grace,—at least without English awkwardness. He looked as little alarming as a man of six feet, with a good deal of hair about him, could well do; but it may be supposed that the company were not a little startled. Certainly few gentlemen were ever so received in their own house. Mary felt inclined to scream, but only broke into a low hysterical laugh. He seemed to enjoy their intense astonishment.

"Ha! ha!" he burst out at last, for no one else spoke,—"quite a family party, I conclude. Come, I'll tell you what—I'm glad to see you all; I've not seen a soul of my own name or kin for fifteen years—don't look strange at me because I'm come home."

"John!" said his cousin, finding voice at last—"John! I'm heartily glad to see you — welcome home!"

The other looked at him for a moment—they were

keener eyes than Mr Joseph Simpson's. "Joe," said he—there was no mistaking the honest face—"Joe, I believe it!" And he dashed his hand into his cousin's, and turned his head aside for a moment—perhaps to look at Sam.

"I'm very sorry, Joe; not sorry I'm alive, you know, that can't be helped; but sorry you've been disappointed. I called at Grindles', and they told me all about it. Never mind, Joe; the old place shall be a home for you and yours; and you'll forgive me for coming back."

Mr Joe Simpson made no reply; he never was a good hand at speeches. He turned his head away, now; probably to see what Mary was about. "That's your daughter, Joe," continued Mr John, who was much the most at home, as he had best right to be; "I never thought any of our lot would have shown so much blood. Gad, what a sweet sight it is to see an English girl's face!" And he proceeded to mark his appreciation of the opportunity by a very emphatic kiss, for which he made a very proper apology, but Mary would have been quite content without it. "And this your eldest son—how these young ones run up; an't an atom like you, Joe, my boy! but a very fine young fellow;" and he shook George heartily by the hand, to which George as heartily responded; he had not the least objection to be taken for one of the family. "But what's this, my dear," said he to Mary, from whom in

truth he had hardly taken off his eyes—"what's this? you've been crying!"

What could poor Mary do, but cry again? His voice was so kind: he looked so inquiringly into her eyes; he took her hand so gently. This was cousin John! Oh, how glad she was there was to be no more rejoicing over his money!

"I shan't cry any more now you are come back," she said.

"Now, no humbug," said cousin John; "you didn't cry for me, you know; what's this all about, eh?"

He was told all about it. In half an hour, cousin John and his heirs-expectant were the best friends in the world. He was taken into everybody's confidence; what he whispered to Mary no one ever knew, unless she has told George Harrison now they are married. He promised to go back with Sam to school, and to skin Vardy, if necessary, in case a magnificent supper to the whole fraternity of Lindley House should not be found sufficient (combined with a quiet hint to the doctor) to insure Sam's future popularity without having recourse to that extreme measure. By the time the faithful Zachary had informed Mr Grindle of his principal's arrival in flesh and blood, and that gentleman had made himself up to come down-stairs again, cousin John Simpson had been restored to his own without a heartburning

or a grudge from any one of his dispossessed relations. Over Mrs Simpson's and Augusta's disappointment we prefer to draw a veil. They bore it like women, and said they "always knew cousin John would turn up again."

"You haven't told us, Mr John," said Grindle, "how this strange mistake arose, after all?"

"It comes of doing things by halves;" and he took a colonial newspaper out of his pocket, and pointed out this paragraph to Mr Grindle.

"On the 11th ult., at Point de Galle, Ceylon, on the voyage home, John Simpson, Esq., her Majesty's Consul at Tranquebar, *to Celestine Sophie, relict of the late Count de Leon Savigny, Colonel in the Austrian Service.*"

"They put in only half the announcement, you see, and so it got among the deaths, and was copied into the English papers. I made them print it here with an apology. It was rather a sudden thing," continued Mr John, "and I couldn't come off at once by the Formosa; I only landed last night. She's a very fine woman, and can't speak a word of English, so there'll be no family quarrels, Joe; and mind what I say,—here's a country-house for you and yours as long as it stands."

Mr and Mrs John Simpson have no family; they are on the best terms with all their London cousins; and Mr and Mrs George Harrison are their constant guests.

A MODERN MAGICIAN.

BY W. W. STORY.

SEVERAL years ago I had the fortune or misfortune to be attacked by a typhus fever of great severity. I say advisedly fortune or misfortune, as such a fever would be considered to fall within the one or the other category, according to the temperament of the patient. Notwithstanding the fact that, on my convalescence, I found myself for a time changed from the robust, vigorous person I had been before my illness to one with shattered nerves and with all my senses in so irritable a state that a sudden noise would jar me from my balance, and set me trembling, I still count it a fortune to have passed into and through that strange world of fever, and to have made acquaintance with the forms of delirium which then presented themselves to my mind. The boundaries of the real and the ideal, or rather of the actual and the imaginative worlds, were then obliterated. I passed freely from the domain of facts into that

of dreams without being aware of the separation. In truth, many of the incidents of my visionary life seemed to have more coherence and reality than the actual things which I, in common with those around me, saw. My walls made pictures that were visible only to me. The rumbling of carriages on the street, and the hum of the busy life outside, changed in the portals of my ears into musical forms or poetic utterances, became the murmur of vast forests, where roamed strange shapes, and fluttered brilliant and unknown birds, and through which at times crawled nauseous forms from which I strove in vain to flee. Or again, I heard in that confused din the sunny dash of snowy surf ridges plunging along a gleaming shore, where troops of airy figures wound about in harmonious dance, or lifting into the air, streamed away like vapour into the blue distance. One creature who visited me in this strange world was a sort of gnome or dwarf, whom I first saw standing on the post at the foot of my bed, with an enormous portfolio as tall as himself under his arm. He was hideous, yet of most friendly aspect, and after smiling graciously at me for some time, crept round, seated himself at my pillow, and threw open before me his portfolio. I have seen many drawings and rare portfolios, but none were ever like this. As page after page he turned, I beheld not the shadows of scenes, but the scenes themselves,

living and changing before me. Vast Alpine mountains and valleys, like what we dream the Alps may be, but which their facts never realise to us—glorified, sublimed, by light and height and colour—with opaline splendours of snowy peaks, and carpeted valleys of arabesque patterns, sailed over by condors and rocs and fabulous birds; visions of such lands as are seen and indicated in the Arabian tales, with transformations which, strange as they were, seemed simple and natural;—interiors of vast cathedrals with splendid processions, and crowded with music such as sane ear never heard, that rolled round the shafted heights, and played among the carven figures which leaned from the ceiling. Surely it was a fortune to have been introduced into a world like this, and to have believed in its reality. Yes, thoroughly believed in it, with no misgiving; for these were, for the time, the only real existences, and the friends who walked about and tended the poor sick creature on the bed, and pitied him, and strove to soothe him, were merely spectral, and had no real existence. Sometimes, in what we call sane days, after perfect recovery, I had a dim question in my own mind as to what is real and what is purely visionary—such deep impression did these fever dreams leave on my mind.

Another curious fancy then beset me. I thought for a time that I was two persons—one of whom

was perfectly well and happy and tranquil, and the other was in pain and distress—and yet there was the same identity of personality; and often I begged that this one should be gently moved to a more restful position, while the other should be carefully left as it was—having nothing to desire for the latter, and everything to wish for the former.

These are simply hints at a condition which I doubtless had in common with many who are under the influence of fever, and I merely note them here to show how two existences may go on side by side, and a dual personality be possible. It may account for some of the experiences I intend to tell in this paper.

As I gradually recovered my strength, the recognised facts of this world regained their hold on me, and I became what we call sane. But in the sanest minds there is a leaning to the unsane or delirious tendency, and this is seen in dreams, and in the literature of dreams, for so I call all those imaginative stories and narratives such as the 'Arabian Nights,' which have their foundations in dream, and from which we derive so strange and fascinating a delight.

I did not rapidly recover my strength, and my physician, who was a man of too much experience and sagacity to treat all his patients by one rule, among other means to restore my irritable nerves, tried the effect of magnetism. I experienced much

benefit from this, and became more tranquil in my moods; but my health still remaining feeble, he finally advised me to travel, and change at once all the influences that surrounded me. "Go to Rome," he said; "there you will find a soothing climate, and a multitude of objects to interest you; and a winter's residence there will restore you to yourself again."

I was only too happy to follow this advice—for it had been the desire of my life to go to Rome—and I immediately began to make all my preparations for the journey. On the evening before I was to set out he called upon me, and after sitting with me a few minutes and giving me general directions as to the care of my health, he took from his pocket-book a letter addressed to Signore Marco Curio, Rome, which he placed in my hands, saying—

"I have brought you this letter of introduction in the hope that Signore Curio may possibly be of assistance to you. Many years ago, when I was in Rome, I made his acquaintance by mere accident, and during the few months I stayed in that city I saw him frequently, and was much astonished at the extent of his information and the peculiarity of his views as to the treatment of certain branches of disease which are little understood among us. He leads a very retired life, has not the confidence of any of the profession, by whom he is generally considered as a quack, is a remarkable adept in

legerdemain, professes to have powers as a magician, and, indeed, gave me some remarkable proofs of his skill in this mysterious art. As you may suppose, I placed very little confidence in this, looking upon the whole as a delusion; and as he usually spoke of it in a mocking way, I am far from persuaded that he is not of the same opinion. But however this may be, his acquaintance with the subject—historical, theoretical, and practical—is, to say the least, very uncommon; and, whether you believe in it or not, he is quite capable of making it very interesting. The reason for which I give you this letter is simply that you may avail yourself in case of need of his singular power as a magnetiser—for in this gift he far exceeds all whom I have ever known. I myself began with being a complete sceptic on the subject of magnetism, but I was unable either to account for or to gainsay the practical facts which he exhibited to me on several occasions. You know that we physicians—regular physicians, I mean—are of a very sceptical constitution of mind, and do not readily admit even very strong evidence in favour of powers transcending the ordinary and, as we call them, legitimate practice of our profession; yet I must confess to you that now, as an old man who has at least had a large experience, I am persuaded that we know much less than we pretend as to curative means, and there may be, and in fact I have known many,

cures effected by means which were apparently not only wholly inadequate, but quite illegitimate and unrecognised by any college of medicine.

"To return, however, to Signore Curio, I cannot vouch for his character or respectability. He is not considered as a respectable person, and no one in Rome seemed to be acquainted with his family, or to know anything satisfactory of his history. In fact, there was something about his physiognomy and in his manner which repelled me, at the same time that a certain oddity and frank whimsicality attracted me. I would not at all recommend him as a friend, and yet I think that he may be of service to you; and I have, therefore, brought you this letter, which you can use or not, as it seems to you best."

I thanked my friend for his kindness, took the letter, and he bade me good-bye. The next day I sailed.

I was charmed with Rome. It was something so different from all I had seen, that its very novelty attracted me. Born and brought up in a country where everything was raw, new, and changing every day, it was delightful to be in a place which was its opposite in every particular. Here all was old, fixed, and changeless. There was a feeling of repose and a peaceful quiet melancholy brooding over everything, which, after the excitement and almost exasperation of life in the new and strug-

gling life of my own country, was most grateful and soothing to my nerves. It was like coming out of the glare of sunshine into a cool, refreshing shade. The sharp, tense outlines, the clear, definite landscape, the skinless, shell-like sky, which tormented my nerves at home, were here changed for a veiled atmosphere full of delicate gradations of colour that involved all things in a kind of material sentiment. The sharp prying sunshine which used to keep up an irritating espionage in America, saying constantly, "I have my eye on you—wake up—go ahead—no idling here," which made constant labour a necessity, and would not suffer one to be tranquil or lazy for a moment, no longer irritated me. Everything, on the contrary, seemed to pray me to linger, to repose, to be calm. Nature, as it were, magnetised me into peaceful moods. My intense activity of mind began to subside into dreaming. I wandered through the cypress alleys of the old villas, lingered by the fountains, whose soft monotonous spill of water soothed me. I lay under the shadows of the lofty stone pines, and listened to the sea-like murmur of their wide-spread tops. I sat for hours on the ruins of the palaces of the Cæsars, happy simply in inhaling the delicious air that breathed in over the Campagna, in gazing at the silent mountains that dreamed in the distance, veiled in tender deeps of opaline air and light, or in watching the palpitating lizards

that slid up over the ruins, and gazed at me with a shy and timid confidence. In my long, aimless reveries, disturbed by no sense of work to be done, bound to the present by no immediate chain, I seemed to float about in thought, to be wafted hither and thither by some influences to which I yielded a perfect assent. Sometimes I seemed to see as well as feel the figures of the past, dim shadows of the ancient days, moving about me in their old haunts, and wherever I wandered I felt a mysterious sentiment steal over me. I should not have been startled, such was the condition of my mind, to meet at times the figures of the ancient poets, orators, and emperors, or even of the ancient gods themselves. among those peaceful and beautiful ruins.

Some months went on in this way, when one morning in turning over my papers I came upon the letter to Signore Marco Curio, and my curiosity being somewhat stimulated by what my friend had said about him when he gave me this letter, I determined at once to present it. I met with considerable difficulty, however, in obtaining any information about him. Those to whom I applied seemed never to have heard of him. The name was not an uncommon one, but nobody of that name answered at all to my friend's description, and I was on the point of abandoning my inquiries, when one day by mere accident I came upon the track of

him. I was making a call upon a young artist, a countryman of mine, when my visit was interrupted by the entrance of a man who brought with him a case containing, apparently, some musical instrument, and who was presented to me by my friend the artist as his music-master.

"Are you going to take a music lesson?" I asked. "If so, I will not interrupt you any longer."

"Oh, don't go," was his answer. "Yes, I am going to take a music lesson; and perhaps it may interest you when you know what it is. If so, pray stay. You know," he continued, "that I have been studying music for some time, being of the opinion that no artist who wishes to arrive at excellence in his profession should attach himself solely to one art, but at least should make excursions into some of the others, and thus enlarge his perceptions and susceptibilities. All are the same in their essence, and simply different in their expression; and if a man addicts himself exclusively to one, he is pretty sure, sooner or later, to fall into a mannerism, and, so to speak, make a rut in his mind. Nobody ever yet was great in one thing who knew and did only that one thing, as some day I will prove to you when we have time enough to talk the matter over. Acting upon this theory, I have been, as you know, studying music zealously. Well, a little while ago a whim seized me—I daresay you will laugh at it—that I should like to know how the

ancient lyre was played. It came into my head one day when I was making a sketch of Mercury, and I determimed to find out all about the matter, make me a lyre, and play it. But how to go to work was the difficulty. I hunted up the subject in all the encyclopedias and rubbishy old books I could get hold of, but I could get no clear idea of anything from books. My impression was, after reading numerous treatises on the subject, that the writers of them, despite their book-learning and scientific explanations, would have been sorely puzzled to construct and tune a lyre, much less to play upon it. At all events I could get no clear notion either of the ancient music or of the temperament and tuning of the lyre; so, giving up books, I went to some learned archæologists, who gave me interesting lectures on the subject, and a great deal of useless information. The musicians to whom I applied seemed to have troubled their heads very little on the matter; and I was becoming rather a bore by playing too much on the ancient lyre, when one day I fell in with a strange sort of a fellow, a Signore Curio, who has not, by the way, a particularly good reputation even among the few who know him, and who is devoted to magic and spiritualism, but who did really seem to know something about the ancient lyre."

"Oh, you know Signore Curio," I said. "I have been inquiring for him a month at least, and no-

body could tell me anything about him. I have a letter for him. Can you give me his address?"

"Certainly," he answered. "I have written it down in my note-book, I believe. Wait a minute, and I'll find it for you." He then began to look for his note-book; but the studio was a topsy-turvy place, and he could not find it at once. Suddenly he cried, "What an ass I am! Here is Paolo Febo, who knows him perfectly well, and will give you his address. I say, Febo," he cried, turning round to the music-master, "my friend here has a letter for Signore Curio, and is asking for his address. You can tell him, can you not?"

The music-master bowed, and said, "He lives in the Vicolo di Parnasso, number twenty, fifth storey, on the right of the stairs. It's the old Palazzo delle Muse—so called from the statues of the Muses which used to stand in the Cortile, and you will know it by the remains of some of the old statues, without heads and arms, which are still to be seen there."

"That's it; I now remember!" cried my friend, "and a precious old place it is, I can tell you, and picturesque enough, but perhaps there have been places more comfortable and in better repair. Eh, Febo?"

The music-master bowed again, and said, "It is not what it used to be when the family was in its pride."

I wrote down the address in my book, and begged my friend to proceed with his story.

"Oh," said he, "my story, as you call it, is about finished. This Signore Curio, hearing that I was interested in knowing how the ancient lyre was played, told me he thought he could help me. 'The fact is,' he said, 'I know how to play it myself tolerably well; but I have a friend who really understands the instrument far better than I do, and is less out of practice, and if you like I will send him to you. But I don't think you will like it. It is too monotonous for modern tastes. I have myself an old lyre of the most primitive character, which I made out of a tortoise shell by simply straining three strings over it; but my friend has a much better instrument, with all the improvements which were afterwards added, and I am sure he will gladly give you lessons on it if you wish, for the poor fellow is rather hard-up at present (the theatres being shut), and will willingly earn an honest penny, and thank you too; so, if you like, I will send him to you. It will be no trouble to me, as I see him every day, and he and his sister live close beside me.'

"Accordingly he sent me Signore Febo, whom you see before you. An excellent fellow, by the way, and very much the gentleman. (Pho! pho! he doesn't understand English.) So you see, I am really hard at work at the instrument. By the way, wouldn't you like to hear it? He plays uncommonly well, I assure you; and if you feel any

sort of interest in it, stay with me, and he will give you a touch of the ancient lyre."

I said how glad I should be to hear it, was formally presented to Signore Febo, who was good enough to say that it would give him pleasure to play to me.

There was certainly something interesting in Signore Febo's appearance. He was rather tall and slender, with a careworn face, full, almost too full, lips, and a chin so large as to verge upon the sensual. It was evident that the world had not gone well with him, and there was a sad look in his large dark eyes. But large, dark, sad, sentimental eyes are too common in Rome to distinguish any one, and some of the stupidest fellows I know possess them. His hair, which had originally been of a golden blonde, had now turned to a delicate silvery grey. It was worn away from the temples and from the crown of the head, but was rather long behind, and curled in his neck, and on the top of his forehead there still remained a thick tuft of curls, knotted closely together, which, as he took off his hat, he carefully adjusted up and arranged with his hand. His movements were refined and graceful, but rather studied, and he somewhat reminded me of an old beau of the last century in his formal politeness, pointing his toes out and constantly bowing; or rather he looked like an old French dancing-master who had once been of the *haute*

noblesse, and who was now of fallen fortune and in exile. His dress was decidedly shabby, though it had been scrupulously brushed, and was as well preserved as constant care could keep it. He wore a pin with a winged horse in white enamel in his scarf, and he carried a cane on which was a skilfully carved serpent for a handle. His linen, though coarse, was perfectly clean, and his collar, too large for the fashion, was turned down so as to expose a large throat. For shoes he wore a sort of pumps of undressed leather, cut very low, and with scarcely any heel; and the gingerly way in which he stepped gave him an air of affectation.

I was on the whole struck with his appearance as something quite out of the common run of music-master, and was decidedly interested in his favour. On reiterating our request that he should play us something on his lyre, he took his instrument carefully from the case, and began to tune the strings. After preluding a little, he then struck from them a wild monotonous air unlike anything I ever heard before, meagre, and with scarce a chord, the unisons of the octaves frequently sounded together, and the notes moving in peculiar intervals, reminding me at times of the intonations of the Canto-fermo of later days. As he went on his eyes became animated with a strange fire, his nostrils dilated, and a look of enthusiasm illumined his face. Suddenly he broke forth with a high tenor voice, a little strained and

sharp, but still melodious, into a recitation rather than song, the words of which were apparently Greek, though pronounced with such an entire difference of accent and sound from that which is taught to us in our universities as Greek, that I failed to recognise a single word. Strange as the music was, it moved me with its wild rhythm, its sudden pulsations, the stress of its lengthened solemn tones, and the hurrying of its more rapid ones. There was something wonderfully self-contained in its character, as if it were the accompaniment to a kind of majestic dance, but differing from our music as a procession in basso-relievo differs from a modern historic picture, the latter being in many planes, and the other only in one. At last it ended; and as he looked down upon us, his eyes being, while he played and sang, fixed in the air, the enthusiasm died out of his face and figure into an unutterably sad smile, as the glow fades in the forge when the bellows cease to blow.

"In what mode was that?" I cried: "it was very striking, new, and vehement."

"In the Phrygian mode," he answered. "The Doric is more grave and majestic, as the Æolian is more sweet and soft; but I scarcely think they would please you so much as that which I have played. The Phrygian is most modern in its character. Would you like to hear the Doric?"

He then played us a strain of Doric, which was a

solemn majestic movement in the minor mode, but which, as he said, though impressive, wanted the fire of the Phrygian. We thanked him warmly, and expressed our admiration at his performance.

"There was a time," he answered, in a dejected way, "when I could play—when I was something; I am very happy if I have given you any pleasure; at present the music which delighted the Greeks cannot be expected to please. Tastes and religions have changed, and he who led the Muses on Parnassus would hardly find a second place in a modern orchestra."

"Indeed! indeed!" I cried, "that is rather hard on the divine Apollo. If he were here to play, I think he would be able to enchant us as much as ever he did the Greeks."

His mouth and nostrils curved with a look of half scorn, and then dropped into a melancholy and incredulous expression as he said, "You have kindly listened for a quarter of an hour, but with all your kindness I fear even you would soon tire of hearing it played—at least by a poor music-master like me. But," he added, with a deprecating bow, as if to apologise for a liberty he was taking, "would it be agreeable to you to proceed with your lesson, or shall we postpone it to another day?"

"Oh, do not let me interrupt you," I cried. "I have trespassed too long already. But, before I go, let me again thank you most heartily for the

rare pleasure you have given me. Though you depreciate your own performance, I doubt whether Apollo himself could play better. I had no idea that the ancient music could be so impressive. But these old Greeks were a wonderful people. Their sculpture, drama, and architecture rhymed together, I knew, and formed a species of trilogy; and now I find that their music is of the same composed and strong quality. Sometimes I even doubt whether we have had the best of the bargain in exchanging their simplicity for our variety, their single plain for our perspective; and as for our religions, I am not so sure that Apollo was not quite as satisfactory as St Peter. St Peter is certainly not so prepossessing in his appearance. Do you not sometimes question whether Jupiter, Apollo, Minerva, Juno, and the rest, may not have their turn again? I don't know that I should not vote for them, for I do not see but that the saints we now worship are the same thing in a new and less manly dress."

A sudden flash went across Signore Febo's face which transfigured him. It seemed absolutely to radiate light; or, perhaps, this effect was occasioned by a gleam of sunshine, which, at the moment, came through a crevice and played about his head. It was, however, but an instant illusion, and my friend did not seem to observe it. Signore Febo bowed with a sad smile and said, "That is a

dangerous sentiment to express in Rome. I am afraid that the old dynasty has had its day, as St Peter will have his."

So I said good-bye, and departed, thinking as I went along of Signore Febo, and pitying him, as a man who evidently "had had losses." His face, now that I came to think it over quietly, did not look quite Italian, though his pronunciation of Italian seemed perfect; and I was possessed with the idea that I had either seen him before, or at least some person who closely resembled him. But with every effort I could not recall the person thus vaguely suggested by him. Nothing is more annoying than this confused kind of remembrance. Vainly we seek to drive away the haunting question; again and again it returns and torments us like a buzzing fly that, brushed away, comes perseveringly back to alight on the same spot. However, I could not satisfy myself on this point, and at last I was forced to give it up.

A few days after this interview I set out with my letter in search of Signore Curio. The address was so exact that I had no difficulty in finding it. The house was, as it had been described, an old palazzo a good deal decayed and gone to ruin, but it had evidently in its time been handsome, and remains of its former pride and beauty still clung to it. A fountain, covered with mosses and green slimy weeds, stood facing the entrance, and the

water still bubbled scantily out of bent pipes into an old reservoir, and dribbled on to the pavement below. One or two old statuettes corroded by time stood askew in little niches over it, and among the green leaves and maidenhair ferns dropping from the crevices of the basin and the wall peered out coarsely executed masks with gaping mouths, holding pipes, out of which the water had long ceased to pour. Three antique statues, without heads, and with shattered arms, stood in three of the nine niches, and these represented the Muses of which Febo had spoken. The staircase to the first two storeys was broad and imposing, with granite columns, and a somewhat elaborate though now rickety balustrade; but ascending beyond them it narrowed and crept curiously round unexpected angles, leading sometimes to additional stairs beyond long corridors, and finally at the fifth piano, fairly blown, I found a door with the name Curio on a brass-plate. I pulled the soiled green cord which hung outside, a little bell tinkled, and in a few moments an odd-looking woman pushed back a little slide which covered a grating on the floor, and cried, "Chi è?"

I gave the usual answer, that I was a friend, and sought the Padrone Signore Curio, upon which she ushered me into a large bare room and left me, saying she would ask if the padrone could receive me. In a few moments she reappeared and conducted me into an inner room, where, after waiting a while,

the door opened, and in came a slender man with a dried-up face, and robed in a shabby dressing-gown. He peered at me with a pair of sharp black eyes as I advanced to him and asked if I had the pleasure of seeing Signore Curio.

"*A servirla*—at your service," he answered.

"I have a letter of introduction to you from my friend Dr ——," said I, and I put it into his hand.

"Ah! ah!" he cried, "from my old friend the American doctor—a very clever man. Excuse me; pray take a seat, and let me see what he says."

He seemed much amused as he read the letter, glancing up from it now and then with an inquisitive look at me, and then continuing its perusal. At last he finished it, came forward, shook me by the hand, with a chuckle of suppressed laughter, made me welcome, and began to ask me about my health.

I told him I was better, but still not reinstated in strength; that I suffered from nervous irritability, and hoped, as my friend the doctor had suggested, that he might be able to help me; that I was aware of his powers as a magnetiser, and that I had experienced benefit from that treatment in America.

"Ah! ah!" he replied, "as for magnetism, that is considered objectionable here—not according to the notions of the Church—St Peter never mag-

netised. They do their miracles their own way, and look with an evil eye on us who use their trade in a surreptitious and uncatholic way. However, we shall see—we shall see. I suppose I can trust you from what your friend says?" and his little eyes seemed to look through me.

There was a singular expression in those sharp black eyes not altogether agreeable—something, in fact, very sinister and cunning. Nor was the face, despite its extreme cleverness, one to inspire confidence. It was of a restless subtle character, full of sudden changes, ever mobile and varying. His look was never steady for a moment, and his mouth constantly twitched as he spoke. His forehead was low, and he wore an old faded wig, which was combed straight down over it nearly to the eyebrows. His legs were clothed in black stockings, and satinet small-clothes, which he kept covering with his dressing-gown, and which were as continually exposed in consequence of his restlessness. His feet were small and delicate, and he constantly shifted one leg over the other, and jerked his foot with a nervous motion. His thin slender hands were incessantly at work. He drummed on the chair—he twisted them together—he played with a little ivory paper-folder, throwing it up and catching it again unconsciously; and had a singular way of touching and holding everything which I have observed as peculiar to jugglers. As he spoke he

moved them about, and often twitched up his sleeve, so as to expose a slender and flexible wrist. Altogether, a more nervous person I never saw. His sentences also were spasmodic, and uttered in a sharp, quick tone.

"Ah! yes, as you say," he continued. "You believe, then, in magnetism, and spiritualism, too, I suppose—eh!—do you really? Odd people the Americans. They believe in so many things. Did you ever see any table-turning—any manifestations—that's the word, isn't it? Oh! you believe in it, do you?"

"I don't know," I answered, what I believe; I have seen extraordinary phenomena, for which I cannot account, and which I cannot explain by any of the so-called laws of nature, as we stupidly call the generalisations of our common experience; as for explaining them on the hypothesis that they are juggling, *that* seems to me quite unsatisfactory.

"In the first place, the conditions on which juggling is conducted are different; and then I suppose there is no juggler's trick which is not explicable and simple to any one practised in the art. This evidently is not. It is no matter of sleight-of-hand, nor of machinery. What is it, then? If the scientific men, instead of pooh-poohing such facts, would only set themselves to examine into them, would it not be more satisfactory? I have no doubt that there is a vast deal of deceit and

imposture among many so-called mediums; for supposing their power to be genuinely what they affirm, it is manifest that it is not always under their control. Then what a temptation it is to make a sham manifestation! But it is not the number of sham manifestations that constitute the great fact; it is the one real phenomenon. For the most part, people are quite satisfied that they have exposed all mediums to be impostors when they have shown that one person at a given exhibition was an impostor. If they cannot explain one simple phenomenon which is beyond their 'laws of nature,' they immediately go to work to prove that another class of phenomena, under different conditions, by a different medium, were impostures. The fact is, we don't wish to believe, nor to examine. What we are accustomed to see is according to the laws of nature—and all else is imposition. This is a cheap and easy way of satisfying ourselves. But, after all, is any one thing more difficult to explain than another? How do we see? how do we move? what is life? What we are in the habit of seeing, we think we understand, because we see it constantly; but our explanations are but re-affirmations, and no explanations at all. If you ask a scientific man how we see, he will give you a lecture on the mechanism of the eye; but what seeing is, nobody ever has or ever will explain. There is no inherent reason, beyond our experience,

why, if I can move my hand, I cannot move a table on the other side of the room, without touching it. If I can see and affect you at a distance stretching out beyond myself by the eye, why not also do the same by touch? Why? To say that we cannot, that it is contrary to experience, is simply a statement of fact, it is no explanation. There is no inherent reason why we cannot—at least, none that we know. Suppose a person with sight should be thrown into a colony of blind men who never had heard of such a faculty: the blind men could constantly give him every argument against his sight that is given by the opposers of the so-called spiritual phenomena. (I object, of course, to the word spiritual, because that is an attempted explanation to which I do not subscribe.) First, let us examine the phenomena: do they exist or not? then it is time to answer whether they are 'spiritual' or not."

"Bravo! bravo!" cried Signore Curio; "you are really an enthusiast—I see we shall get on together. Why, yes; we in Europe know nothing of what we call magic—don't believe in it; we believe in miracles, provided they are done in an orthodox way. In the church we have large swallows for this kind of things,—ready to swallow camels if you please, but strain terribly at gnats. Curious people, these Europeans; never have had any prophecy—cannot see into the future—don't believe in spirits, and cannot from their constitu-

tion. Europe is the understanding of the world; the Orientals have more spiritual power, and are more removed from the material; they have invented all the religions. Is the West getting nearer the East, and so catching reflections of spirituality from it?"

"True, we don't trust our senses," I replied, "and say they can cheat us, and yet we refuse to trust anything else. The word 'spirits' irritates us, and yet we are all spirits plus a body, and can do nothing except as mere spirits. We are a curious mass of contradictions; as for myself, I know not what to believe, but I am as ready to believe in one thing as another, provided I have equal reason to do so. Why not believe in to-day's miracles, as well as in those of Moses?"

"Ah, yes," said Signore Curio, and he chuckled to himself. "Moses, the great lawgiver, was very skilful in magic, after his studies in Egypt. The rod and serpents was a very pretty trick; I sometimes amuse myself and my friends by performing it. Wait a minute."

So saying, he darted through a little door behind a heavy portico, and returned in a minute with a little ivory stick about three feet long.

"Would you like to see the trick?" he said.

I nodded assent.

He threw up the rod three times in the air, making it whirl so rapidly that it looked like a blurred

wheel of misty light; and as it descended the last time he caught it in his right hand, and, holding it out to me, I saw twisted around it two brilliant serpents, that darted at me their quivering fangs. He then threw it up a second time, and, catching it in his left hand, showed it again as a plain ivory stick.

"Wonderful! astounding!" I cried; "why, Robert Houdin is nothing to you. My friend the doctor told me you were very clever at legerdemain, but I had no idea that you were such an expert."

"Nonsense, nonsense!" he said. "It requires only a little sleight-of-hand. It's no miracle—not even spiritual, ha! ha!—but I should not laugh at you. Just see!" and he threw it up again, and again held out the rod with its two serpents. "Don't be afraid," he said, as I shrank back, having a horror of serpents; "they are not alive—merely spiritual serpents."

Rather timidly, I took the rod. Certainly the serpents were not alive, though they were so perfectly imitated in coloured enamel, that I could scarcely trust my senses as I looked at them.

"How beautifully made!" I exclaimed, as I held them up. "And this rod, it is the very caduceus of Mercury!"

"Ah, so it is; odd, isn't it?" he cried, with a strange mocking tone, and an ironical sneer. "But come with me into the inner room," he added; "we shall be friends, I see. There's no use to keep you

at arm's length, as I am forced to do with these precious Romans. One faculty I do really possess, that of reading character and knowing at a glance whether any one I meet is really related to me spiritually, and therefore trustworthy—a faculty not peculiar in any way! Everybody more or less possesses it, provided they trust themselves, have nerves, and can read their own consciousness. But we are too wise now for that;—we trust what we call our judgment, and reject our instincts. We never accept our impressions, but begin to reason upon them, and so mar and obliterate them. But the intellect is less wise than the spirit, and vastly slower. The soul is as sensitive as the eye—it sees at once. As well say I don't see physically at first, as spiritually. Spiritual perceptions are as instantaneous as sight. Instincts are superior to reason. All our religion is the product of instinct, not reason. The dog knows his friend at once: so does the man, unless he befog and bewilder his mind with his judgments and reasonings, as he calls them. You are my friend; I can trust you; come into my sanctum."

So saying, he lifted the curtain, and we went through a corridor to a large room in the rear of the house. A peculiar aromatic odour of spice and frankincense pervaded it, and mingled with the faint scent of orange-blossoms that was wafted in through the open window. Heavy curtains ob-

scured the light, and swung over the doors; and a curious old Persian rug was spread upon the floor, with strange and softly-coloured patterns, unlike anything I ever saw. It was very much worn, and from its wear had become even more beautiful, taking therefrom a tone like that which is given by time to a painting. The walls of the room were covered by shelves filled with old books in vellum and faded leather. On a column in the corner sat a great white owl, looking wise and solemn. Antique draperies, with cabalistic figures embroidered over them, were here and there swung along the walls, and over them curious swords and billhooks, and several ancient casques, one of which had wings extended on either side. Two or three busts of yellow and waxy marble, representing the pagan gods, were standing here and there; and several old brown engravings were mingled among the paintings. There was no order in the room—a great divan with frayed cushions, shabby but luxurious, occupied the centre, and there were several large arm-chairs of stamped leather, with dull gold figures. The ceiling was divided into panels, on which were old frescoes, partially obliterated by time and obscured by smoke; and from the centre hung a Venetian coloured-glass chandelier.

It was a mysterious kind of room—all the more mysterious from the silent sunshine which stole in,

and made it seem strangely quiet and lonely. Spiders had woven their cobwebs in the corners of the ceiling and across the panels, and it was evident that the housemaid's broom came seldom there to disturb the dust and the silence.

"I do not ordinarily admit new friends here," said my host—"never, unless I trust them; and, as I said, I trust you. You are looking at the owl—a fine bird. It is not mine; it was left by my sister when she went to America. Monstrously wise, isn't it? I have a little laboratory opening out of that door, where I amuse myself at times, for there are moments when I need distraction. Some of these books are monuments of human folly, and yet interesting. You will find among them all the old works on magic and the cabalistic arts. But I have lettered them 'Lives of the Saints,' lest some one should pry in here and make trouble for me. I live very much alone, though there are several of my old friends still here who visit me at times. I confess that it is rather dull, but I cannot make up my mind to leave Rome, where I have so many very old associations, going back to a period when I was not so badly off as now. Most of my old companions of better days have departed; but the old gentleman in whose house I was brought up will remain, and there are always two or three of us who stay to keep him company. Rome, too, is pleasant,

though somewhat sad to me; but I keep up my spirits in more senses than one, and—— No matter, here I am, and here I shall probably stay. And now, let me take off this old wig, which I wear chiefly for disguise, for it annoys me."

When his wig was off, the change was very great. His hair was closely cut, but curled thickly about his temples and on the back of his neck; and he looked some fifteen years younger at least, but, if anything, more nervous and excitable.

"As to magnetism," he now commenced, as he seated himself in one of the old leathern arm-chairs, "what can I do for you? Shall I try if I have any power?"

"Thank you, you would do me a great service."

He drew the curtains across the windows, placed himself before me, and, lifting his slender hands, waved them before my eyes, and then placed them on my forehead. His touch was like electricity. A cold shudder ran down my back, and this in a moment was succeeded by a vague dreamy languor. The air began to thicken, the pictures and furniture swam together, and gently died away into a soft misty background. Then I saw two streams of lambent fire issue from his finger-tips, and the whole scene vanished. My eyes closed, a soft flood of light poured all around me, and I was gently lifted from the earth and borne away into space.

The earth disappeared. Delicious odours and exquisite music assailed my senses, and a strange sweet delirium bathed my brain. Figures floated around me, vague at first and indistinct, then clearer and clearer, until at last I seemed to be at a banquet of the ancient gods. Hebe presented me with a cup of nectar. Venus, radiant and flushed as a rosy morning-cloud, smiled upon me. The calm majestic Minerva, Juno grand and dignified, the athletic fiery-eyed shape of Mars, and the agile lithe figure of Mercury, were moving around me. Their voices fell upon my ears like music. Jove's refulgent face shone under his snowy locks and beard; and his voice was like an organ-note rising and falling, and filling the air with its intonations. The visionary Psyche moved there among them pale as the morning moon; and Cupid, with childish mischief in his face, shook his auburn curls and threatened me. How long this lasted I cannot tell, but at last a black cloud enveloped me. I felt a rush of air in my ears as if I were falling, and, suddenly opening my eyes, I saw Signore Curio standing opposite me, and smiling an ironical smile.

"Ah, well!" said he, "you are more susceptible than I thought. Do you feel better?"

I drew a long breath, sighed, and could not speak. He arose, went to a little closet, poured out a pale liquor in a glass (I saw him do it as in a dream), and then put it to my lips. I drank it

at a draught, half mechanically; but as soon as I had tasted it, I cried—

"By Zeus the Glorious, that was like the nectar I quaffed in Olympus, for there I was when you woke me."

"My dear sir," said Signore Curio, "your oath was most improper. Bacchus is the only pagan god they swear by here—out of old custom. I know not what St Peter and the Pope would say to it; and as for nectar, what I gave you was a glass of old cordial."

"Was it? Well, it was uncommonly like the Olympian nectar."

"Ah! ha!" laughed he, "there is nothing, after all, like imagination. You are evidently a biological patient. But there is one thing that you will not imagine, I fancy," and he laughed jeeringly, "and that is, that I am like one of your Olympian gods."

"Not exactly," said I, and we laughed together. "But you have really done me much good, and I beg you will allow me to return another day, for now I have trespassed too long on your patience and kindness."

"Come when you will," said he, "my good spiritualist."

Thus ended my first visit to Signore Curio; but his magnetism was so beneficial to me that I was anxious to renew it as soon as possible. This strange man had certainly obtained a wonderful

power over me; and though the personal impression he had made on me was a strange mixture of attraction and repulsion, yet I longed to see him again, and as soon as I could do so with decency I made him another visit, the result of which was, as far as my health was concerned, equally favourable. In consequence of this I made an arrangement to go to him regularly twice a-week and be magnetised, and thus we became intimate. During these interviews he would often surprise and amuse me by wonderful feats of legerdemain, and would generally introduce them by some jeering and sarcastic speech about the Holy Catholic Church, or St Peter, or some one of the saints and their miracles. I was curiously struck, also, by observing that he always spoke tenderly of the ancient Greeks and of the Grecian mythology, and often, in his sarcastic way, apologised for it, pretended to believe in it, and to defend it as a system of religion.

I forbear from reporting the cynical arguments with which he was wont to support his extraordinary views on this subject. It suffices to say that they were extremely irreverent, though often quaint, and amusingly sarcastic. Sometimes he would compare the notions of a Deity in the writings of Jeremiah and Isaiah with those of Plato, contrasting them to the disadvantage of the Jewish prophets, and quoting text upon text with a mock-

ing sneer; sometimes he begged, with an air of sarcastic humility, to know whether the punishment of Uzza accorded with my notions of a just and forgiving God; sometimes he jeered at the worship of the Madonna under her various titles and attributes, and at her intercession for sinners, and insisted that she merely represented, in a new and not improved dress, Minerva, Diana, Flora, and others of the female divinities of the pagans. When he was in this vein opposition was worse than useless, and I generally found silence to be the best policy. There were occasions, however, when he went so far that I was forced to rebuke him.

"Ah! my dear sir," I said to him once, when he was in one of his wildest moods, "we had better not talk about this subject; our views are utterly different; your language offends me — it sounds blasphemous to my ears; you believe in nothing— I am a Christian!"

"Well, well," he answered, "I don't wish to offend you. I think the Greeks, in personifying nature by their gods, acted upon a natural human impulse, and the Christians do the same—I don't see much to choose between them. It is the sentiment of a superior power which is the great thing in all religions. The old gods had their faults, and they had their virtues too, and I don't admit that the world gets on any better without them. The people will have superstitions, and that, perhaps,

was as good as any. At all events, the Greek divinities were good-looking, which is more than you can say for your dried-up cadaverous saints, and stood erect on their feet instead of crawling and cringing and beseeching with such an infinite deal of mock humility and hypocrisy. Look at the Greek gods in the Vatican, and compare them in attitude and bearing with the mean-spirited figures of saints that contort themselves in strained and affected attitudes in the Catholic churches, as if they were ashamed of being men, and were in a chronic state of terror. One thing has certainly been lost, rather a valuable quality too—that of simple manliness and heroism of action. The heroism of your religion is endurance, and all your actions are inspired by fear. But why insist that this world is an abomination, its beauty a snare? Instead of thinking about another life, would it not be better to do your duty in this, and thank the gods (I beg your pardon; but I am a heathen, you know) for their wonderful gifts?

"As for Zeus and the Greek dynasty of gods, if you really want to know what they represented to the highest minds of Greece, read Plato, and compare his notions with those of Jeremiah, but do not confuse the loftiest spiritual notions with the vulgar superstitions of the crowd, whose ideas are always of the earth, earthy. The fables of the poet are simply veiled allegories or parables, having an

interior meaning, and not to be taken literally; and as for legends, what is more legendary than Genesis, or than the lives and the acts of your saints? Their miracles are really amusing. Such feeble efforts, of which any really skilful adept in legerdemain, not to say magic, which is a higher art, should be ashamed. Why, there is not one of them which I could not teach you to do in a couple of hours, or to imitate. Yet these miracles must be a monopoly to the saints. Such sinners as you and I cannot turn tables and be wafted in the air, because that would be the devil's work. Only let a priest be able to do it, and lo, a miracle!"

"But as for this flying in the air?" asked I. "Have you ever been lifted up by the so-called spirits?"

"Perhaps," he replied, and laughed.

"Some day, then, perhaps," I said, "you will let me be present and see you upborne in the air."

"Oh, certainly—any time—provided you let no priest know of it."

And so he did one day. We had been looking at some beautiful pairs of dove's wings on the wall, and after praising them, we passed on to talk of flying, when I suddenly said (for as I held the wings in my hand the idea came into my head), "If, now, one could only have a pair of talaria like those of Hermes, and fly away simply by tying them on to the ankles!"

"True," he cried, "that was a capital way—and why not? Suppose I should tie these wings on my feet, and put my hands on the table, perhaps, who knows what might take place? Stop, let us take one of these old Saxon casques with wings on the sides, that will represent the petasus of Mercury well enough. Shouldn't I make a capital Mercury?"

Half-jesting he did so. He put the casque on his head and tied the wings on his feet, jesting all the while at the ridiculous figure he was making of himself, and then sitting down opposite me at the table and fixing his eyes keenly upon me, he stretched out his hands as he was accustomed to do when he magnetised me. Suddenly a ridiculous fancy took possession of me—I suppose it was in consequence of his mesmeric powers by which he had obtained so complete a control over me, that but a minute was required to throw me into a mesmeric state—but I certainly seemed to see him rise from his chair, and slowly float upward into the air. Then the ceiling as he reached it dissolved, the dress vanished from his body — the caduceus was in his hand, and he waved it to and fro over me. It was the god Hermes, he who conducted souls to the Elysian fields, the slender, agile, elegant figure, beautiful in its sinuous motion, with the petasus on his head and the winged talaria on his ankles, that I beheld floating over me. And yet he seemed to have the face and features of my

companion—the same cynical smile, the same black sharp eyes, and the same movement of the hand that I had so often noticed. I was so confused by this that I placed my hands to my eyes and pressed them closely on the balls for a moment to clear my vision. When I opened them again, I saw my host sitting before me, just as he was before I seemed to see him rise, and looking as if he had never moved.

"How do you feel, now?" he asked. "You seem to have fallen into a sudden trance — an ecstatic one, to judge from your expression and movements; but I hope it was not disagreeable, and that you are quite recovered."

"Yes, certainly," I answered, "I must for the moment have been beside myself, and yet the transition was so sudden and natural, that I could not distinguish its boundaries,—and what I had seen in my natural state, so mixed itself up with what I beheld in my trance state, that even now I am confused. It was the oddest thing — and now that I look at you there, I am a little ashamed to tell you what fancy suddenly took possession of me, it seems so ridiculous. But I really thought I saw you rise in the air, and that those dove's wings became the talaria, and that casque the petasus, and that—in a word, that you were Hermes himself."

"Singular indeed," said he, "yet so natural.

You were, at the moment, when unintentionally I threw you into the trance state, jesting about Hermes and the petasus and talaria, and saying it would be a capital thing to fly, when suddenly your trance state supervened, and what was in your mind at once assumed an exterior form. It is a very common case with persons who are such natural mediums as you."

"I daresay," replied I, "but it is astonishing how vivid an impression I received. It will not leave me." And I added, laughing, "I never hereafter shall be able to distinguish you clearly and absolutely from Hermes."

"I am quite willing, provided you do not make the police and the priests parties to your biologic fancies. They are quite capable of believing anything which will afford ground for a persecution."

At this moment a lovely girl whom I had never seen before, put her head into the door, and said, "The Padrone wants you, if you can come as soon as you are disengaged."

"The Padrone!" I said. "Then I will leave you at once. But, pray, is that the Padrone's daughter? I never saw her here before."

"Gad, I don't know; he has such a lot of them that it's not easy to say. She may be. Curious old fellow the Padrone. I must present you to him some day. Is rather imperious in his notions, and somewhat irascible at times; and as I wish to keep

on his right side, I think, with your permission, we will finish the seance for to-day. I will go and see what he wants. He might turn me out of the house, you know."

"Is he married?" I asked.

"Oh, yes! married—very much married—to a regular dragon of a wife, who is as jealous as—as —Juno." And then, with his singular smile, he added, "I call the old fellow Jupiter, and he don't look unlike him, with his great white beard and thick snowy locks. Some evening I will invite him up here, and you shall meet him. And now, addio—I know you'll excuse me."

This last interview I could not get out of my head. There was something so odd about my new friend, that I determined to make some inquiries about his history and family of Febo, if I should chance to see him. So the next day I went to the studio, hoping to meet the music-master there.

I saw my friend the artist, and in answer to my inquiries he said, "I too have felt very anxious, and have endeavoured to get some information about him, but with not much success. Very few persons seem to know him, and nobody can give any satisfactory account of him. Febo, to whom I have spoken, pretends to know nothing, and at all events I have got nothing out of him to satisfy my curiosity. But, as far as I can learn, his family was of Greek origin, and came here heaven knows

when. Febo is, I suspect, related to him in some way, though he is very shy of talking about him and his affairs. I know also that there is an old man, a respectable and inoffensive person, who lives in the same house, but he never goes out, and at times the family seem to disappear, for nobody knows where they go. After years have passed some of them return, or their children return, or persons return who look uncommonly like them, and bear the same name. This, I daresay, sounds odd, but I use this language advisedly, because some of the oldest men remember this family here, and they say that when they were children they remember to have heard their fathers speak of this old man, who was then apparently as old as he is now. So you see the present old man must, in all probability, be the son of the former, or some relation. Febo, too, has a sister who is a striking young woman, and who figures sometimes as a ballerina on the stage. But, after all, nobody seems to know much about any of them. Perhaps the old man is the Wandering Jew—or Paracelsus —or Hermes Trismegistus—the Lord only knows. Why don't you ask Signore Curio himself? He will or will not tell you, as the case may be. For my part, I suppose they are one of a hundred old Italian families who have fallen from their pride of place—lost their fortunes but not their pride, and so keep out of sight, and live under disguised

names perhaps. As for Febo, he is evidently a gentleman by birth and education. There is something noble in him, which shines through his shabby dress, and it is plain that he is above the profession by which he now supports himself. Poor fellow! I really pity him, he seems so dispirited and poor. He makes just about enough to live upon by playing in the orchestra at the Valle Theatre, but it goes against his grain terribly."

"Well, this is not very satisfactory," I replied. "I think we shall have to raise the spirits to tell us who these people are, unless Curio will enlighten us on the matter. I certainly will ask him about the family when I see him next, but whether I shall be any wiser after it who can tell? He is a strange genius, and about half the time I cannot quite determine whether he is in jest or in earnest in what he says."

Though I made this resolution, I never was able to carry it out. Whenever I approached the question I got nothing but jeers, cynical remarks, and persiflage from Curio. It was evident that he meant to keep his secret.

One evening, however, at the end of the winter, when the buds were just beginning to burst, and the almond-trees to robe themselves with their white blossoms, and the soft breezes called to the flowers that sprang up over all the Campagna, I

found Signore Curio in a more serious and expansive mood. "I know," he said, "that you are curious about me and my family, and have endeavoured in vain to find out our history. An admirable quality is curiosity, but it leads us sometimes into scrapes. I never intended to give you any light on this subject, but I have taken a fancy to you, and after all it may be amusing to you to know our history. It can do no injury to us as we are just about to flit, I don't know where, and you will be gone too in a few days, and perhaps we shall never again meet, and so I will tell you our secret. Not now," he added, as he saw I was prepared to listen with eager curiosity; "but if you will come here to-morrow night at about twelve o'clock, we shall all of us be together—all, I mean, that are in Rome—and we are to have a sort of symposium. The Padrone is to be here, and if you will make one of us you shall hear what you shall hear, and see what you shall see—and *basta cosi* for the present."

I did not ask to be invited twice, but accepted with great warmth.

All the next day I wandered, my favourite haunt, in the palace of the Cæsars, anxious for the night to come, and excited at the prospect of what the meeting might bring forth.

At half-past eleven I was at Curio's door. He received me in his inner room as usual. "You

are a little early," he said, "but no matter; I believe they are all ready for us down-stairs, so come along."

I followed him down to the second storey. There he rang. The door opened of itself, and in we went. After traversing several rooms, we came at last to a vast saloon, lighted by an antique Venetian chandelier hanging from the centre, beneath which was a table spread for supper. The walls were hung with ancient silk hangings defaced and faded, but rich in texture, and woven into a strange arabesque figure, the gleaming light of which showed fragments of fruits, flowers, and birds, that came and went as one changed place. Some pictures hung here and there, and quaint old curiosities of china and bronze were scattered about on the cracked marble consols. Some ebony statues held on their heads vases of Oriental alabaster, in which were lights that shone through their veined strata, and two large mirrors in ebony frames with bevelled edges, bleared and dimmed with age, miserably reflected the candles of the chandelier. It was, in a word, a shabby old saloon, gone to seed, like many that may be seen in the old palaces of Rome belonging to fallen families.

My acquaintance Febo was there, and rose to welcome me in a serious way; and Curio at once conducted me to an old gentleman who sat in a

great satin-covered crimson arm-chair at one end of the room, and presented me to him, almost seriously, as the friend of whom he had spoken, and who would join them at supper. Then turning to me, he said, "Our Padrone."

The Padrone made a stately recognition of me, without rising, and motioned me to a chair, saying—

"Our accommodations and our banquet are poor, and not what they should be, but you are welcome. Curio, shut the door."

There was something very imposing in the Padrone. His snow-white hair, still very thick, was parted in the middle, and fell on either side his temples in massive curls, that mingled with his full and flowing beard. A thick mustache was drawn away from his mouth so as to display lips still full, despite his age. His forehead, between and above the eyebrows, was projecting, and in it were two deep horizontal wrinkles; and from beneath his heavy brow looked large, hollow, and severe eyes of a dark yellowish brown, which had in them a certain still and peculiar light, as of a flame burning behind a thick porcelain shade. His complexion was of a dull bronzed tawny hue, with no colour; and his expression was dejected, though severe. He had something of the lion's look when it is caged. He wore a long loose sort of bournous, with sleeves of an ivory white; and his yellow

slippers, which only covered the centre of his foot, leaving his toes free, peeped out under his dress, and were placed on a footstool. Altogether, as I looked at him, I thought I had never seen so strange and imposing an old man.

Curio bustled about in a nervous fidgety way, and talked a good deal, which somewhat relieved me of my awkwardness at first. After a few minutes the door opened, and in came a florid rosy-faced man with curling hair, accompanied by a woman, whom at first sight I did not know whether to call a lady or not. She was fantastically dressed, as if she belonged to the stage, with touches of rouge on her cheeks. But her face was good-humoured, and as soon as she entered she ran forward in a free, careless way to the Padrone, and greeted him with a kiss. Curio gave a start of surprise, as did Febo; and even the Padrone looked as if the visit was unexpected.

"What! you here, Affy?" cried Curio; "and you too, old boy?" turning to her florid companion. "Where on earth did you come from, and when did you arrive? We had no idea that you were here. But you've come in the very nick of time. Did you smell the fumes of the supper from afar, and cry, like the war-horse, Ha! ha!"

"Why, the fact is," said the rosy-faced man, "Affy and I got terribly tired of Paris, and set off at a moment's warning. She wanted to see

you all once more, and she was worn out with noise and late hours and general dissipation, so we packed up suddenly, and here we are."

In the midst of the welcome that followed, in came the Signora Padrona, the wife of the old gentleman—a stately-looking hard old lady, in a turban with two white feathers in it, who somewhat grimly saluted Affy—and with her a slender dried-up old maid, in a stiff brocade, with a thir face and lean arms and neck.

The company having now arrived, supper was ordered, and we were soon seated at the table. The Padrone and his wife took the head, and sat in two great high-backed chairs; opposite were placed Febo and the old maid, who, Curio whispered to me, was his sister; while Affy and the florid-faced man took the side opposite to Curio and me. We were waited on by the pretty girl whom I had seen for a moment at the door of Curio's apartment, and a good-looking butler, who served the wine.

Where the wine came from I cannot imagine, but, to my surprise, it was excellent, and the guests soon began to feel its influence, and to warm into vivacious conversation. Affy and I became good friends at once. Despite the rather doubtful respectability of her dress and general appearance, she had a very sweet smile, and seemed thoroughly amiable and jolly. Indeed,

as the supper went on I got to think her decidedly handsome. Curio was full of spirits, with his puns and toasts and satirical compliments.

"By Jove," he cried, "(excuse me, Padrone), but here's to the health of our Parisian Bacchus. You need not blush any more," turning to the rosy-faced man, "and pretend you don't believe I mean you. Your natural complexion is high enough without blushing. You're the best Bacchus I have seen for many a day, and you look uncommonly well your part. You used to be a little lighter and smaller round the waist once, perhaps; but you don't look terribly dyspeptic even now."

"Oh!" he cried, in answer. "Everybody here, even our new friend, knows who you are; but here's to your purse, which is not so lean, I hope, as it used to be."

"As for purses," cried the Padrone, and he caught up a knife and fork in his right hand, threateningly, "if it were not for these audacious saints, at whose head I should like to launch these thunderbolts, the purses would be full enough, and I should not be such a poor old effigy as I am now."

"Pray be quiet, and behave yourself with more dignity," here broke in the Padrone's wife; "and as for you," turning to the old gentleman, "I'm ashamed of you; put down your knife and fork, and don't make a fool of yourself by talking of thunderbolts. I am positively ashamed of you."

"You always were," muttered the Padrone, "when you were not jealous of me."

"And a good right I had to be so," she tartly answered, "for a more disreputable way than you had of going on with every silly girl you met could not be imagined; and for an old man like you it was really shameful. There was that weak fool that you gave my swan to, for instance; and that Dora you got into such a precious mess by a box you gave her; it ought to have been a box on the ears."

"Oh, dear!" cried Affy, "don't let's have any of those old rows over again; I'm fairly sick of them."

"And well you may be," cried the old lady; "but you were no better than the rest—so undignified."

"Well, thank heaven," replied Affy, "I have no dignity, never had any, and never want any — I never saw any good come of it. But do let us love one another now at all events;" and rising, she ran round and gave a kiss to the Padrone and another to the old lady, who, a little mollified, relaxed into a smile, adjusted the feathers in her turban, and said—

"There, there, that will do. You've quite disarranged my head-dress. You are a foolish creature, and never will learn how to behave properly. I suppose we must put up with you as you are."

"The next thing you'll be doing," cried the old maid, in a sharp voice, "will be to kiss the stranger, whose name I have not the honour of knowing."

"Well! where's the harm," she retorted, "if I do?" and she instantly turned round and gave me a kiss that made me blush all over.

"Bravo!" cried the rosy man, "you're a dear good creature, Affy, whatever they say of you. Here, Gianni," he added, "fill our glasses, and we'll all empty them to the Goddess of Love. And, by the way, this wine is of the real old brand,—I don't know when I've tasted a better bottle, and I consider myself a judge—rather. I haven't a better in all my cellar at Paris."

"I rather think not," said the Padrone, shaking his locks. "It's out of the old butt—of the year 8, old style. You don't find it nowadays anywhere else than at my table."

"Where's old Si?" called Febo, whose character was rapidly becoming more genial under the influence of the wine. "I should like to see his jolly face again. Why didn't you bring him with you from Paris?"

"Impossible," rejoined the other; "I was obliged to leave him there to attend to the business of the firm. I don't know what I should do without him there, though he does get so outrageously drunk sometimes, that I am afraid the police will be in on us. What a row he does make when he

has a regular rouse with those hairy fellows of his about him!"

"A very improper habit indeed," said Curio. "I don't know how enough to condemn it A man should have very little to do with spirits, except in the way of magnetism. Eh, my friend?" turning to me.

"I wish we could have a little music," cried Febo, "such as we used to have before those nine girls went off to the chorus of the Grand Opera in Paris. They used to sing such capital songs."

"Oh, by the way," cried Affy, "who do you think I saw the other day in the Boulevards? Who, Curio, but your blessed hairy son, with his crooked legs and goatee and curved nose. He has given up tending flocks; and there he was with his goat-skins on his legs, blowing away on his pipe, and holding his hat out for *sous*. I laughed as if I should die. He was pretending to be an Abruzzi shepherd. I gave him a napoleon, and he cried out with a leer, 'The Madonna and the saints have you ever in their keeping'—the scamp!"

We were all of us now getting rather excited by the wine, which was as strong as it was good—at least I was; and the figures around the table seemed at times to swim before my eyes. But I remembered the promise of Curio, and determined to take no more wine until he had told me who they all were. However, such resolutions were

of little avail, and I kept breaking them as fast as I formed them.

I can give little idea of the jollity of the circle, which, as it grew warm, grew witty. The spirit of it, however, wholly escapes from my pen. As the time went on, I began to notice a singular fact. The persons at the table grew gradually younger and handsomer. Whether it was mere fancy or not, the old maid seemed to be slowly changing into a young and slender woman, graceful and elegant of figure. Febo's face beamed with inspiration, and seemed to radiate light. The red hue of my *vis-à-vis's* face softened into a youthful flush. The wrinkles wore out of the Padrone's forehead, and his locks looked luminous as the electric flame that follows a vessel's wake. His wife also seemed to grow grander and more attractive in her dignity; and as for Affy, I fairly lost my heart to her. "Rouge on her face, indeed!" I thought; "her cheeks are like the first blush of morning."

"Good heavens!" I whispered to Curio, who was also changing in his aspect into a graceful and lithe young man—"who are you all? Am I mad, or magnetised, or what?"

"Silence and attention," cried he aloud. "Olympians, our friend here was never at our symposium before; he says he is afraid he is either magnetised or mad, for he is beginning to fall desperately in

love with Affy; and as for the Padrone, he says he is a perfect Jupiter, by Jove—he never saw such a splendid old fellow,—quite equal, he affirms, to St Peter."

A roar of laughter shook the room; or was it laughter? I looked at the Padrone, and he shook his hoar locks; and the room trembled again, and a strange smile was on his face.

"Olympians, shall I announce your names to my friend?"

"The god of Olympus shall decide," was the cry of all; and the god of Olympus again smiled and nodded assent. And there was a sound as of thunder overhead, and the carved eagle above his chair shook out its wings and screamed.

"They are taking away my trunks up-stairs," said Curio. "My friend," he then said, turning to me, "your request is granted; you shall know who we are. We are a few of the exiled gods of Olympus, at your service. Allow me to present you to Zeus the Thunderer; at the head of the table is his august spouse, the divine Juno. Then, at the opposite side, is Phœbus Apollo, commonly called Febo, with his sister Diana. Our *vis-à-vis* is Bacchus. Who that disreputable person is at his side you will easily guess. She is Aphrodite, whom we call Affy, the best creature in Olympus —I beg your pardon, I mean in Rome."

"Here, Hebe," he cried, and the lovely girl who

had served us was at his side in a moment—a loose delicate tunic dropping from her ivory shoulders, and leaving her rounded arms bare, and her bosom partially uncovered; "and you Ganymede, commonly called Gianni nowadays," and he, too, the butler, changed into the elegant cup-bearer of Olympus, approached—"give to drink of our nectar to the stranger, and heap his goblet full."

I lifted the goblet before me—it was one pure crystal — and drained the delicious nectar with which it was brimmed. It seemed to inundate my whole being, and to slip through every vein of my body. I became at once a new person, and I felt and knew that I was among the gods.

Astonished and speechless I looked about me. The likeness which had so long haunted me in Febo was now clear. But the Belvidere statue was but a poor representation of him as he then stood before me: a splendour trembled all over him; the golden curls were like an aureole around his head, a delicate mantle fringed with a purple border hung from his left arm, and in his right he carried a lyre of tortoise-shell inlaid with silver, the chords of which he struck as I looked at him. At his side was Diana or Artemis, the huntress, in a short tunic with a pale green edge of ivy leaves, her nostrils expanded, her figure quivering with spirit and animation. Her delicate head was poised gracefully upon the long slender neck, and a golden

fillet was bound closely around her hair, one or two stray locks of which, escaping from beneath it, curled like the tendrils of a vine below her square thin temples. She was tall, of a dark olive complexion, clear as the shadow of a brown brook, slender in her limbs, and had a strong family resemblance to her brother at her side.

"Look at your love," said Mercury, who, succinct, small-headed, with jet-black curls, a compact spare figure, quivering with nerves, touched me on the shoulder, and pointed across the table with his caduceus to Aphrodite.

How shall I describe her? She looked at me with one of those smiles which seem to draw the soul out of one. Her hair rippled in sunny waves off her forehead, and, gathered behind by an amber ring studded with pearls, thence crept loosened down in a sinuous mass over her dimpled shoulders. Her eyes, which were of a dark violet rimmed with black, were full-lidded below, and slightly lifted with an amorous languidness. Her lips were full and ripe, like some perfect fruit. Her nose was straight, and chiselled with wonderful delicacy; her nostrils clear and thin like a rose-leaf. From her small shell-like ears dropped two exquisite pearls, and the slope behind them down into the shoulders, where mortal woman is so defective, was in her perfect. Was her neck slender or full? I cannot say—it was faultless, I know, and swept

down into the luxuriant curves of her bosom with a drooping sea-line. Her arms and hands were full and slightly dimpled at the elbow and on the knuckles—not too full at the wrists—while her nails were like roseate mother-of-pearl. But why seek to describe her who is indescribable?—her image will always remain in my memory as the absolute perfection of womanly fascination.

"Don't stare at me so," she said; "you will make me blush more than ever Paris did."

A sound of silvery laughter went round the table, and all involuntarily glanced at Juno, who frowned at the recollection thus awakened. I too followed their eyes, and although my eyes and soul had gone to Aphrodite, I could not but be struck by so extraordinary a beauty, though of so opposite a type. Tall, stately, square-breasted, with dark-ruled eyebrows, under which were severe but glorious eyes, a diadem of gold upon her compact and harmonious head, full robes, gathered high on her chest, and girdled above mid-waist with a broad and flashing zone, whence the ample folds flowed to her feet, —she was the most queen-like and imposing figure I ever saw, but one to reverence rather than to love.

"Paris!" she said, with a curl of her short lip, and a look of infinite disdain,—"Paris was a poor weak fool, like all mere men, who preferred a courtesan to a woman. To him mere flesh and blood counted more than anything else."

"So he was, dear Juno," said Aphrodite. "Had he not been a mere mortal fool, he would never have preferred me to you. It was no fault of mine, you know, and I am sure I have never known what to do with his apple."

"We all know that you are the most beautiful, Aphrodite," said Juno, appeased; "but Paris was a poor weak creature, as we also know. Let us talk of him no more."

"It's lucky Minerva is not here," muttered Bacchus, and shook his curls. "She too is a splendid creature, if she were not so confoundedly wise. She bores me to death with her wisdom and her virtue."

An owl, which I had not before observed, here hooted and screamed from the top of the bookcase on which he was perched.

"Great Olympus," cried Bacchus, "is she here?" and he looked around him. "The Parcæ take that owl—how it startled me!"

As he said this, I turned to gaze at him, and if he was less brilliant and inspired than Apollo in his look, he was more charming. All that man can own of attraction was his—broad, square-shouldered, slim-loined, light and powerful in his build, and with one of those faces that you love, that haunt you, that draw women after them with invisible cords not to be broken. As Venus was the perfection of woman, so was Bacchus of man. He seemed

harmoniously moulded, and like a simple utterance of nature, not strained to any direction, but evenly organised and sympathetic.

"Here! Bacchus," said Aphrodite, "don't talk any more, but drink—that's your vocation—or dream—but don't argue. And pray let Minerva alone, or you will rue it."

"Arguing! May I ever be saved from that," cried Bacchus, "either for or against any one or anything. I was only afraid Minerva might be here, and then we should have had arguing enough."

Again the owl hooted.

"Oh!" said Mercury, "that is one of those wise birds of hers that she left with me when she went to America."

"Poor Minerva!" said Juno, "times have changed with her sadly, but she bears herself bravely up. Yet I pity her—in exile, and with such work to do."

"Well, really I don't see that she is worse off than the rest of us," cried Apollo. "Who would ever have dreamed in our glorious days, when we were worshipped as divinities, that we should ever come to this? When we were all scattered on that fatal night, and robbed of our divine prerogatives, and forced to flee and hide and disguise ourselves, and become like common mortals, and compelled to earn our living, what could we expect but unhappi-

ness? More or less we all suffer, for we cannot die; and we are in this worse off than any mortal can be. For my part, do you believe that I, who once was worshipped as the God of Light and Poesy, take pleasure in earning a scant livelihood by now playing in the orchestra a second fiddle—now giving a few ill-paid lessons in music—now teaching children to dance; or that Diana, with all her memories of the past, and her peculiar and shy temperament, can endure with anything less than disgust her *rôle* as ballerina at a second-rate theatre?"

"Oh, dear me!" said Bacchus, "it's bad enough for all of us, but we must make the best of it. It rather amuses Affy and me sometimes, our life in Paris; and as for old Silenus, whom I have taken in as partner in the wine and spirit trade, and who attends to the retail business, he does not seem to suffer very much, at least when he is drunk, and that is pretty often. Keeping a wine-shop is not the highest of employments, but there's no use to get into the dumps—is there, Affy?"

"Well, perhaps not," said Aphrodite; "but I really do sometimes get so tired with playing everlasting farces and foolish pieces on the stage, and being the pretty soubrette, and getting kissed by everybody, and being generally disreputable; but I declare I think I do prefer it to keeping a 'Young Ladies' Seminary' at Olympus Lodge, Parnassus,

Alabama, as poor Minny does now. And yet she seems to be immensely fond of it, proud of it too—teaching, as she says, the young idea how to shoot. Her wisdom all comes out. She can lecture and argue all day long. The scholars and the committees all look up to her, and make her addresses on public occasions, and pass resolutions in honour of her and her seminary. And there are some such nice pretty creatures among her pupils, that if it were not for her intellect she might love them. But really her programme is enough to kill one with laughter, with its 'highest intellectual branches of education' and its 'dissemination at once of instruction and morality, thus leading youth gracefully up the precipitous steeps of science.' I am afraid I should become dreadfully improper climbing those precipitous ascents."

"I say, Bacchus, can you give us any news of Neptune and Pluto?" cried Mercury. "I have not heard of them lately."

"Oh, yes," answered Bacchus. "I got a letter from both of them the other day. Neptune is running a Mississippi steamer now. It is a high-pressure, and named the Trident; and Amphitrite is the chief-stewardess aboard. Last year he got up a diving-bell company to fish up Captain Kidd's treasure, and he had the good luck in his bell to come across an old sunken hulk of a vessel from which he picked up several bags of bullion, enough

to enable him to purchase the Trident. Pluto too, is getting on very well. He has lately been made President of a Grand Junction Coal Mining Company, and is interested in several Colorado mines. He has made his way slowly up from running an engine as driver on a railway, and now is very well off."

"But all this while, now," interrupted Diana, "nobody has asked about Vulcan. How is he now, Affy, dear?—and what is he about?"

"Why," replied Affy, "the dear old blunderer is hammering away as usual. He has just been working out a new invention for casting cannon, and is trying to get the English Admiralty to receive it; but he says they are afraid to try it, for fear it might be successful, and ruin those already in the field."

"And Proserpine and Ceres, I suppose, are with Pluto—are they not? There's nothing new occurred to them, I suppose?" said Juno.

"Oh, no! They are still at their old work, editing 'The Enna Journal,' a magazine of floriculture and horticulture for young ladies. Ceres does the heavy business—has long disquisitions on the 'History of the Potato,' where it came from and where it is going to, and what the blight is; or investigations of the question what the ancients thought of the onion and garlic, and how these are related to the hyacinth, and why their odour is

different. While Proserpine attends to the lighter parts—selects feeble poems on the 'Humming-bird and the Rose,' and makes little paragraphs headed 'Time to Plant Annuals,' 'The Dial of Flowers,' 'Shakespeare a Florist and Gardener,' and looks out for those washy little coloured prints which adorn now and then a number of the magazine. She only spends one-third of the year with Pluto still."

"And Mars, what is he doing now in these stirring times?"

"Heaven only knows," answered Mercury, "but I suppose he too is in America; when I last heard of him he had just been made a brigadier-general in the Federal army, and the papers said he had a chance to be made President if he could only win a battle. That would be a joke, I declare. Perhaps he might bring up the family in that case. I heard lately of one good thing he said to one of his officers who had been making a fearful blunder, 'When you don't know what to do, don't do you don't know what!' If he could only get to be President, he might make me the Secretary of the Treasury—I have been used to a purse—and give us a territory for our own like the Mormons. There we might plant ourselves, gather around us the old friends and believers, and renew the ancient faith. Yes, in some distant solitude of the New World we might in a pure form revive the old religion, far

away from society, and bring back the golden days of Greece and Hesiod. Then we could at least gather together our lost ones—the nymphs of the fountains and rivers, the Naiads and Dryads and Oreads—and all the spirits of nature. Pan and the Satyrs should haunt the woods, and play their reedy pipes and dance on many a western sward. There would we make a happy company; and if we were not worshipped as divinities, at least we might enjoy a calm and sylvan life, and not be forced to those daily shifts for bread, and these wretched disguises. But a truce to those dreams: give us something, Apollo, from your lyre to drive away these mournful thoughts. Strike us something in the Lydian mode."

Apollo obeyed, the strings twanged, and the room resounded to the music. How glorious it seemed! what inspiration was in his face—what mystery in his playing! I was lifted up by it from my mortal senses, and drawn away into a wonderful dream-land, where all the beings of the ancient mythology swarmed around me, and Aphrodite all the while smiled upon me, and caressed me. The actual world was gone.

After this I have no definite remembrance of what occurred, until the next day towards noon, when I waked and found myself in my bed, with the sun streaming in. Bewildered I rose, and looked around me. Had all last night's sights and sounds

been a dream? or where did the actual merge into the visionary? Were what I had seen phantasmagoria of a fevered brain? No! no! they were too real. But then I asked myself—Were not your old fever dreams also real? Nay, but I am well now, I answered.

As I was thus debating the matter, there came a knock at my door. It was the maid, who brought a note, which she said had been left for me a couple of hours before.

I broke its seal, and read as follows:—

"My dear Friend,—I find that you are not yet up, and I regret that I cannot wait to see you. I came merely to say good-bye; for, as you are aware, we all are to leave Rome to-day at twelve o'clock. I hope you are better this morning, for last night I was obliged to accompany you home, you having fallen into a trance at the table, so that I thought it better to take you away quietly, as I feared you had already taken more wine than was good for your health, and had evidently been in a more than usually excited state all the evening.

"Your landlady tells me that you are now sleeping very tranquilly, and I begged her not to disturb you, as I know you need repose more than anything else. I hope you will be all right when you awake.

"My friends all salute you cordially; and in the

hope that some time or other we may meet again, —I am, your obliged friend,

"MARCO CURIO.

"$10\frac{1}{2}$ *o'clock.*"

I ran immediately to the Palazzo, but it was closed, and the neighbours all told me that the family had left in the morning with a good deal of luggage, and they knew not whither they had gone.

EDGAR WAYNE'S ESCAPE.

BY ALEXANDER ALLARDYCE.

I.

A GREAT many people in Lorton shook their heads when they heard that Edgar Wayne was to be the new pastor of Meadow Street Chapel. The most censorious, however, could not bring forward any serious objections. He was very young, said some, for so responsible a charge, but time could be trusted to remedy that defect. Others doubtfully hoped that he had been seriously called to the ministry, and that worldly motives had had nothing to do with his choice of the Church as a profession. A third party sincerely wished he might be sound; but young Mr Wayne had been educated at Cambridge, where, as everybody knows, Rationalism is only too much in vogue: while his predecessor, Mr Bonnyman, who was as orthodox as the most exacting congregation could require,

had never been inside a college all his lifetime. But Edgar Wayne's greatest fault was that he was a native of Lorton. A prophet has rarely honour in his own country; and the people among whom he had been born and brought up, and who looked upon him as one of themselves, could hardly think of Edgar Wayne with the respect and feeling of reverence which were due to the minister of Meadow Street Chapel. Meadow Street Chapel was the most aristocratic and orthodox of Dissenting congregations. Everybody of any social standing in Lorton went there; and there would be quite a crush of carriages at the east door on a rainy afternoon. The two Misses Fernside, old Squire Fernside's co-heiresses, were devoted adherents to the Meadow Street Chapel, although they had been Churchwomen in their father's lifetime; and gossip had not failed to spitefully remark how closely Miss Cecilia's "awakening" had coincided with Dr Wordly the Rector's marriage. The Waynes had always been Dissenters; and it was by their exertions and liberality that a congregation had been first formed in Lorton. There were old folks in town who could remember when Bartholomew Wayne came to Lorton as a poor pedlar about the outbreak of the first French Revolution. Religious liberality was not so well understood then as nowadays, but the villagers could not help being favourably disposed to the pushing young man who

was so regular in his conduct and so honest in his dealings, and they overlooked his studied absence from the parish church. By-and-by the pack grew into a shop, the shop into a warehouse, and the warehouse into a bank, until the Waynes came to be looked upon as one of the wealthiest and most respectable families not only in Lorton but in the whole county; and there was very little doubt that, if Lorton were to return a Member, in conjunction with Hornham and Combeport—as many good politicians averred that it ought to do—Mr Silas Wayne's name would be at the head of the poll. It was the Wayne family that had built the original little brick meeting-house in Meadow Street; that had borne the greater part of the cost of the present elegant chapel forty years later; that had enlarged and decorated it ten years afterwards; and that had endowed both chapel and schools with a handsome annual income. There were other rich merchants in Lorton who would not be outdone by the Waynes in munificence; and the Dissenting pastor drew a better stipend than Dr Wordly of the Established Church did, with all his glebes and tithes to help him; and still a large surplus was left for charitable and congregational purposes.

It was not strange, then, that when Mr Bonnyman was struck down by paralysis, the heads of the congregation should have made up their minds

as to Edgar Wayne's being the next minister before the old man's breath was out. The Waynes themselves, of course, could not move in the matter, but there were plenty of people in Lorton anxious to oblige the banker's family. So the Hoskinses, and the Lanes, and the Cheshams, and the other heads of the congregation, took counsel together, and unanimously agreed that young Mr Wayne was just the man to suit them, and that, in fact, no other person need apply for the vacancy. There was naturally a good deal of grumbling among the other members when, along with the tidings of Mr Bonnyman's death, they received the news that a successor had been already selected. Goodsir, the grocer, pointed out to everybody who came into his shop that this was but another instance of the arbitrary manner in which the affairs of the congregation were being conducted; and that goodness only knew where it was all to end, unless members stood up more firmly for their rights. Phillips, the chemist, who had aspired in vain to be an office-bearer for the last ten years, said that this was a fresh proof of how badly the deacon's court wanted new blood in it, and members had themselves to thank for such a slight when they allowed all the power to be usurped by an exclusive clique. And Swift, the manufacturer, who had made a fortune before he had made for himself a position in the little society of Lorton, cried out loudly against the

arrogance of the aristocracy, and their unchristian disregard for the feelings of their fellow-members. If he were to have any voice in the matter, every man in the church should have his free vote, and the election should be determined by the voices of the majority; if their freedom as a congregation was to be sacrificed in this manner, they might as well belong to the Established Church or to the Roman Catholics at once. But when old Mr Chesham stood up at the church-meeting and announced that, after due consideration, and with a deep sense of their responsibility, a committee of the congregation had determined to invite their young townsman, Mr Edgar Wayne, to become the successor of their late lamented pastor, and were now willing to have the opinion of the brethren on the subject—where then were Messrs Goodsir, Phillips, and Swift, and the other mouthpieces of popular discontent? Goodsir perhaps bethought himself how great a convenience it would be if a certain bill of his, due at Waynes's bank in about a fortnight, could be renewed for another term; and Phillips had shaken hands with Mr Silas Wayne a few days before at the railway station, when the banker had said how much pleasure it would give him if they could have the advantage of Mr Phillips's activity and experience in the deacon's court, and had promised to lend the chemist his hearty support at the next election. As for Swift, an invitation

to second Mr Chesham's proposal had converted that gentleman into one of Mr Wayne's stanchest supporters; and when he rose to speak, he went much farther length than even Mr Chesham had done in eulogising the good qualities of their proposed pastor. At first, as Mr Swift frankly confessed, he had been inclined to prejudge the selection of the committee, and to fear that their choice had been regulated more by social considerations than by a regard for the welfare of the Church; but it was the duty of independent men to try every case upon its own merits and apart from prejudice. Careful inquiry had convinced him, not only that Mr Edgar Wayne was the best candidate whom they could pitch upon, regard being had to his Christian character, education, and ministerial gifts, but that the Meadow Street Church might account itself truly fortunate if its members could induce so pious, so excellent—but for his youth he would say so eminent—a divine as Mr Edgar Wayne to become its pastor. They all knew him (Mr Swift) that he was not a man to allow his judgment to be biassed by wealth or worldly position; and if he could think that there was another man who would do better service to the congregation and the cause of the Gospel than Mr Edgar Wayne, that man might command his (Mr Swift's) warmest support were he the son of the poorest man in Lorton; but men of Mr Wayne's stamp were rare—

mournfully rare—in these evil times. A little buzz —the nearest approach to applause admissible in such a place—followed Mr Swift's peroration; and after that, all thoughts of opposition were at an end, although many doubts and misgivings continued to be bandied about regarding Edgar Wayne's capacity for ministerial work.

It has been said already that the Meadow Street Chapel was rigidly orthodox. Its doctrines held hard and fast by the lines of the Puritan fathers, and a dash of Calvinism had imparted to it a more than ordinary rigidity. Mr Bonnyman had been a shrewd, self-educated Scot, whose theology was strongly flavoured by the tenets of his Presbyterian countrymen, but whose national prudence had taught him to modify his opinions to the views of his English hearers. Thus, though Predestination and Election, the Infallibility of the Elect and a Limited Atonement, were standing canons on the Meadow Street statute-book—and to doubt them would have been regarded as the rankest heresy—one might have listened to Mr Bonnyman from year's end to year's end without catching the slightest allusion to any of these dogmas. The Meadow Street Chapel was animated by a keen missionary spirit. Not a congregation in the county raised a larger sum per member for evangelical purposes, and nowhere was an appeal for funds in aid of any denominational enterprise more cordially responded

to than in Lorton. But Meadow Street could afford to be thus munificent without being taunted with the trite adage that "charity begins at home." There were no poor in Mr Bonnyman's congregation, for all the members were well-to-do householders, and prosperous shopkeepers at the least. Of course there were both poverty and vice in Lorton as in every other town of the same size; and at one period in his career Mr Bonnyman had been brought face to face with the alternative of facing these evils or shirking his duty. But though a hard, unimpressionable man, Mr Bonnyman was too sensible of his responsibilities as a minister to turn his back to the needy and to wash his hands of his erring brethren. It was at this juncture that old Mr Bartholomew Wayne and Mr Hoskins, the two richest men in the congregation, had come forward and volunteered to erect a new mission chapel in Factory Lane for the destitute part of the population, provided the other members would aid them in endowing the building. The reason assigned by these worthy men was, that Mr Bonnyman, in justice to his present congregation, could not enter upon a wider field of labour; but the censorious did not hesitate to allege that neither Mr Wayne nor Mr Hoskins cared to see fustian jackets interspersed with the broadcloth coats in the pews of Meadow Street. It may have been the one or the other of these feelings, or a mixture

of both, that raised the Factory Lane Chapel, but it did a great deal of good among the lower classes; and the congregation in Meadow Street became still more select than it had been before. Between chapels standing in the relation of Meadow Street and Factory Lane, entire cordiality could hardly have been expected; and every now and then little bickerings and jealousies would crop up which it required all the office-bearers' tact to keep from breaking out into public scandals. If Meadow Street took pride in its easy, well-to-do, Christian respectability, Factory Lane was just as ready to parade its poverty, and to pity the disproportionate endowment of worldly goods and heavenly grace that had fallen to the lot of the other. In Meadow Street, sermons savouring of morality were in great repute; while Factory Lane would listen to nothing but the plain letter of the Gospel and justification by faith: so that when the two ministers chanced to exchange pulpits, the Factory Lane folk refused point-blank to listen to such an old, dry, moral stick as they said Mr Bonnyman was; and the Meadow Street members were equally positive that it was much more profitable to read a sermon at home for themselves, than go to church to be disgusted by a ranter like Mr Booth. Factory Lane stigmatised Meadow Street with its Christian deadness, and coldness, and formality; and Meadow Street retorted by pointing significantly to the large £, fol-

lowed also by four goodly figures, which closed its annual subscription list—and by a hint that even coldness and formality might sometimes be preferable to misdirected zeal and extravagant enthusiasm.

When young Mr Wayne was called to the Meadow Street pastorate, the Factory Lane members did not seek to dissemble their disgust, but thanked heaven that *they*, at least, were free from aristocratic influences, and that *their* chapel was not a living in the gift of the Wayne family. At first there were hopes of some of the Meadow Street malcontents joining the Factory Lane congregation; but though they frequently dropped in for evening worship about the time of Mr Wayne's settlement, they speedily fell back upon the old pews in the more commodious and fashionable sanctuary. Worse than that, some of the wealthiest members of Factory Lane, whom a distaste for Mr Bonnyman had driven thither, now betrayed indications of returning to Meadow Street. Poor Mr Booth had thought his lines hard enough when his claims upon the Meadow Street pulpit had been allowed to lie unmooted, but that was a light matter compared to his flock being allured away from him. In vain did he demand from the pulpit what they went out into the wilderness for to see, and warn them against the danger of turning aside either to the right hand or the left in the Christian race to search for novelties. But

by the week of Mr Wayne's ordination, five of the best pews in the Factory Lane Chapel were standing empty at the disposal of the committee; and Mr Booth clearly foresaw that not only would Mr Wayne attempt to draw his people away from him, but that he would be for acting as his diocesan in the Factory Lane Chapel; and the good man had made up his mind to undergo martyrdom rather than suffer the principles of the Church to be thus trampled upon in his person. So when Mr Chesham invited Mr Booth to introduce the new minister to his flock, it unfortunately happened that Mr Booth had already arranged an exchange of pulpits with Brother Morgan of Combeport; and the engagement could not possibly be altered. Mr Booth considered this refusal a daring defiance of the whole aristocracy of Lorton; but the Meadow Street committee, who had only asked the Factory Lane pastor because they could not civilly avoid doing so, were delighted, and hastened to secure the services of Dr Courtenay, who was minister of St Augustine's Chapel at Hornham, and private chaplain to Lady Pottersfield. About this time it was remarked that Mr Booth took very gloomy views of the future of the Church. What could be expected of the people, he asked, when the ministry was treated as a secular profession, like the interpretation of the law and the practice of physic—a cure not of souls, but of silver? They talked of simony and the imposition of unsuit-

able pastors upon unwilling flocks in the case of other Churches: were their own eyes so free from beams that they could clearly see motes in those of other sects? They heard much nowadays of university honours and worldly accomplishments; but did these avail as qualifications for the ministry if grace and godly fear were lacking? Were the twelve Apostles university men? Was a knowledge of profane languages and heathen philosophy required of them that sought ordination in the primitive Church? Far be it from him to depreciate knowledge, for without knowledge there could be no faith, and without faith there could be no salvation; but there was a knowledge that puffed men up, and was it not written that "the wisdom of the world was foolishness with God"? The man who had but the least spark of that knowledge which maketh wise unto salvation, albeit he knew not even a letter, was a more truly learned man than he at whose feet kings and princes sought for wisdom. Might He who was the fount of all true knowledge save them from the sin of boasting themselves of learning, and impart to each and all there present, &c. &c.

But very soon it was noticed that Mr Booth's language underwent a remarkable change. A day or two after Mr Wayne's induction, the young minister called to pay his respects to his elder colleague. Mr Booth was engaged upon a sermon

on the duties of the pastorate, in which he drew a contrast between St Paul's charge to Timothy and that delivered by Dr Courtenay at Meadow Street —infinitely to the advantage of the former—when Mr Wayne's name was brought up to him. The starchy manner and stiff dry tones which he of Factory Lane thought fit to assume, speedily melted away before Wayne's genial frankness; and when the young minister acknowledged how much he stood in need of counsel from his senior's long and varied experience, and begged that he might be allowed to work under him among the poor of the locality, Mr Booth's reserve fairly broke down, and he gave the new-comer a hearty brotherly greeting. But it was not long before Wayne had adroitly contrived to heap several shovelfuls of very hot coals upon the bald scalp of Mr Booth. When the young minister began to talk in a laughing way about his being a miserable bachelor, and to say that he would be infinitely obliged if the other would occupy Meadow Villa at a nominal rent — say half as much as he gave for his present house — Mr Booth's face turned quite scarlet at the startling proposal, and he felt sorely tempted to cry there and then before his visitor. Was this the man whom he and all his congregation had been vilifying for weeks past? the man whom he had suspected of wishing to lead away his congrega-

tion, and of bishoping it over himself? As Mr Booth's eye fell upon the sermon on his writing-table, he felt as if he would like to fling back the offer in the young Pharisee's teeth—either that or to acknowledge like a man how little he merited kindness at Mr Wayne's hands. But the latter course required greater courage than Mr Booth could muster, and there were more considerations than one that kept him from rashly refusing Mr Wayne's generous proffer. There was no house for the minister attached to the Factory Lane Chapel, and Mr Booth's present habitation was a dingy, confined, brick building, in a locality that enjoyed the pre-eminence of being the most unsanitary in Lorton. A change from Factory Lane to Meadow Villa would have saved poor Susan when she died of the relapse from typhus a year ago, thought Mr Booth sadly. The pale-faced children would soon gather rosy cheeks running about among the green shrubberies and upon the trim grass-plots of Meadow Villa. Why, his wife would get quite a girl again if she could be removed from the smoke and smells of Factory Lane; and what sermons, for strength and pathos, would not he himself compose when walking bareheaded in the open air up and down the long secluded alley at the back of the Villa! When he thought of all this, what could poor Booth do but thank Mr Wayne for his kindness the best way he possibly could? But Wayne

would not hear of thanks—the obligation was his; for how could he be responsible for the house and grounds unless he put them into trustworthy hands? He could not go to Meadow Street every morning and see that some burglar had not walked away with the Villa overnight. But he cautioned Mr Booth that he would be remorselessly evicted if any likely young damsel were so far left to herself as to select him for a husband—an event so improbable that it need hardly be taken into calculation. And then Mr Booth laughed, and said he was sorry Mr Wayne had mentioned it, for it would be somewhat hard upon human nature to wish heartily for his friend's happiness, since it would entail on them the loss of such a paradise. After this they became quite confidential, and exchanged opinions regarding the office-bearers of both congregations, which, for the peace of those worthy brethren, we shall not repeat. And finally, Mrs Booth was quite startled by the appearance of the unpopular minister in her husband's company in the little parlour where she was cutting thick bread and butter for tea; and still more by Mr Wayne's ready assurance that he would not be a stranger in future at that family meal. The half-finished sermon was committed to the grate; and when Mr Booth preached next Sunday, it was from the text, "Judge not, that ye be not judged," and his discourse was against giving place to censorious and uncharit-

able thoughts and words. We are not sure that the Factory Lane congregation relished this sermon as well as the preceding ones; but of this we are convinced, that every word came from Mr Booth's heart, and that the sermon was addressed more to his own failings than to the errors of his flock.

II.

It was not without a remonstrance on the part of his relations that Edgar Wayne was allowed to give up the minister's house to Mr Booth. Mr Silas cautioned him against Quixotry and over-generosity at the outset, and also about taking up too much with Mr Booth. Mr Booth, to be sure, was a worthy man, a most worthy man, but—— What this "but" meant could be gathered only from the shrug of Mr Silas's shoulders; and besides, ministers were commanded to be given to hospitality, and how could he be hospitable unless he had a house of his own? Edgar laughingly replied in his college slang that "he'd stand his friends at the restaurant," and Mr Silas went away with a grave shake of the head. Miss Patty Wayne, the younger of the two sisters—her full name was Patience, but she was only to be addressed as such at the risk of a quarrel—chose to be offended because Edgar had upset her pretty airy castle of housekeeping

at Meadow Villa, until the minister expressed his conviction that her disappointment was altogether mercenary for the loss of the "perquisites" she was proposing to levy upon his household stores. And so Edgar Wayne settled down in the old house, and was just treated as he had been during his college vacations, a large parlour only being added to his apartments for the purpose of receiving professional visitors. Miss Wayne had been careful to inform the servants that Mr Edgar was now the minister of the Meadow Street Chapel, and that they must be careful to banish the remembrance of all former familiarities from their minds. But after a short interval of doubtful suspense, during which the inmates of the kitchen were settling in their own minds whether ordination had wrought any notable change in their young master, they gave up the pastor in despair, and "Master Edgar" became Master Edgar once more in the Wayne household.

As faithful recorders of gossip we cannot omit to notice how the society of the Misses Wayne was courted after their younger brother had been installed in the Meadow Street Chapel. Formerly, Mr Edgar Wayne had not been in much better repute than younger sons generally are with families that have marriageable daughters; but as minister of Meadow Street, with the prospect of what he would have at Mr Silas's death, he was

allowed to be a match for the most ambitious Miss in Lorton — ay, even for rich Miss Hoskins herself, if she had not been eight years his senior and so plain. And this was the reason that Miss Lane ceased to call Mary Wayne "an upsetting, aggravating, old-maidish chit;" that Miss Ellen Chesham now managed to put up with "Patience's impatience" and fitful temper; and that Miss Amelia Fairley came weeping to the sisters and sobbed forth her regret that those odious Miss Fentons, with their tattle and gossip, should ever have brought about an estrangement between them, but that was all over now, and they would ever, *ever*, be as dear, darling, loving friends as they had been before in the old, happy days—wouldn't they, dears? Of course Mary laughed in her sleeve, and Patty declared she had "no patience" with such sycophants; but they were courteous enough to their would-be sisters-in-law, and rallied Edgar merrily upon the snares which were being set for him. All the young ladies in Lorton knew —as of what piece of scandal were they ignorant? —the old story about Edgar Wayne and Millicent Wentworth. Millicent was a granddaughter of old Squire Fernside, who had lost both her parents in India, and had been brought up at Little Lorton by her aunts, Miss Jemima and Miss Cecilia. She had attended Madame de Mure's famous seminary for young ladies along with Mary and Patty Wayne,

and the three girls had been inseparable friends, and so exclusive in their attachments as to occasion much jealousy and heart-burning among their class-mates. Dr Caning's Academy is just across the street from Madame de Mure's, a proximity much deplored by the precise parents of Lorton. It was only natural, then, that when Edgar was promoted to a tailed coat and Dr Caning's sixth form, he should show off his gallantry by making love to his sisters' friend, and supplying her with an escort along the shady road to Little Lorton. By-and-by it began to be pretty generally known that Edgar Wayne and Milly Wentworth were sweet-hearting; and many people said they should not wonder though a match might come of it some day. But the young folks themselves thought little of match-making in those days. Each was quite contented in the assurance of the other's love, and marriage was to them like a fairy dream of the future. But years rolled on, and while Edgar was still but a young man, and an under-graduate of Cambridge, with no definite prospect of settling down in life, Milly's education was finished, and she had now been waiting three years for the most important event of a young woman's life. Possibly Edgar was unconscious that Millicent was no longer the girl whose heart he had won in their school-days, or perhaps he looked upon their engagement as so much a matter

of course that he did not think it necessary to trouble Milly with much love-making nowadays. Then followed the inevitable "tiff," Millicent endeavouring in the first instance to stimulate Edgar's passion by a most unfounded charge of flirtation with Letty Lane; and secondly, to excite his jealousy by encouraging the addresses of little Cornet Fernside, a kinsman of the squire's, who had come on a visit to his relation at Little Lorton. But Edgar was too good-natured and careless to get into heroics; and he laughingly confessed that Letty Lane was a charming girl, and he was "big spoons" upon her—the young man had contracted a disgusting habit of talking slang during his first two terms at the university—and pretended to stand in great awe of that fire-eating trooper, the Cornet of the Lightest Dragoons, who was less than him by a good head and shoulders. These stratagems having failed, a quarrel followed, which was at first made up by Mary Wayne's mediation. But the reconciliation was short-lived; because Edgar's letters from college seemed cold and indifferent, Millicent broke off the correspondence altogether, and Edgar, in spite of his sister's warnings, treated the matter as a good joke, and assured himself that all would come right some time. But one day Edgar was roused from his torpor by a hurried letter from his elder sister. Millicent, the writer said, had been with her, vowing that she

had never loved any one but Edgar, and that she would wait a thousand thousand years for him if he would only be frank and loving in the mean time, and assure her that he was really in earnest, but she could not remain longer in suspense, and might be driven to do something desperate before long. Miss Wayne conjured Edgar to write to Millicent without delay, for she dreaded daily to hear that the poor girl had taken some rash step which would entail a life-long repentance. "That wretched little Mr Fernside is *here* just now," added she in a postscript. "I saw him driving through Bank Square this morning with Jem Tylson the horse-breaker, and I am sure *both* of them were *tipsy*." Edgar wrote a most affectionate letter, explaining his seeming indifference, and begging Milly to believe his unaltered constancy; but before the letter could have reached Lorton, he received a marked copy of the 'Times' containing an announcement of the marriage at London —gossips said it was little better than elopement —of Lieutenant Fernside of the Lightest Dragoons with Millicent, only child of the late Captain Wentworth, second in command of the Malwa Irregular Horse.

It was not till then that Edgar realised the full strength of his love for Millicent Wentworth. He could not bring himself to believe it: that Milly should marry anybody but himself seemed an ab-

solute impossibility; and he tried hard to assure himself that it must be all a mistake, a dark unpleasant dream. He had been walking up and down his room that evening when that copy of the 'Times' was brought him, and the dawn of the grey October morning found him still pacing the floor, epistle in hand; but of what he had been thinking during the long weary night Edgar Wayne never could tell. Gradually the truth impressed itself upon him, and he saw how much he had lost, and how culpable had been his self-security and carelessness in not keeping possession of the warm heart that had once been his. Against Millicent he had not a word to say, and he refused to listen to his sister's denunciations of her levity and fickleness. He knew that he might have saved Millicent, and he could lay the blame of all that had occurred upon his own thoughtlessness alone. His love for her had never for an instant wavered; and even now that he had hopelessly lost her, and love became a sin, he could not banish the remembrance of her from his mind. He thought that if he could see her once more, and actually assure himself that Millicent Wentworth was now Millicent Fernside, his passion might be dispelled and his feelings relieved. So he went to Canterbury, where the Lightest Dragoons were then quartered, and from the window he saw Millicent and her husband gallop past for their afternoon ride. Poor Edgar! if he

was ill before he was worse now. He saw her only for a few seconds, but that brief glance seemed to reveal charms which he had never been conscious of having noticed before. Only one thought sustained him; he saw how lovingly Millicent had smiled upon her young husband, and the contemplation of her happiness made him more than half forget his own misery. If he had married Millicent Wentworth, would it not have been the highest aim of his life to render her happy? and now that she had found her happiness in marrying another, should he not rather rejoice in her felicity, and lay aside all selfish feelings upon the subject? This at least was what he tried to do, and he went back to Cambridge a sadder and wiser man, with his heart refined by the working of a hidden sorrow. He had wrecked his happiness upon his own selfishness, and he resolved that for the future he would live less for himself and more for his fellow-creatures. It was but natural that when he came to select a profession, such thoughts should impel him towards the ministry; and his choice chimed in well with his father's inclinations; for, as Mr Bartholomew was to succeed his father in the Lorton Bank, it was the proper time for a family so eminent among Christians as that of Wayne to give one of its members to the Church.

At first, after his disappointment, Edgar had been reserved and gloomy as the most serious

member of his flock could have desired; but the natural vivacity and kindliness of his disposition soon got the better of this moodiness, and the concern with which his friends had watched his sorrow had now given way to a fear that his "lightness" might betray him into the commission of something unclerical in word or deed. But the old love for Millicent still lay close to his heart. By a tacit understanding her name was never mentioned in the Wayne household; but his sisters took good care that he should not remain long in ignorance of anything relating to his lost love. Envelopes addressed in the old familiar handwriting would be temptingly displayed upon Miss Patty's workbox, and full opportunity would be afforded the young minister of making himself acquainted with the contents. There was little satisfaction to be derived from the perusal of these letters. Each told with less reserve than its predecessor of Lieutenant Fernside's increasing neglect, of his passion for wine and billiards, and of his brutal conduct when he came home intoxicated from mess night after night. Then came a long pause: and when the correspondence was next resumed, the red "queen's head" upon Millicent's envelopes had been replaced by the vermilion eight-anna stamp of her Majesty's Indian Government. The Lightest Dragoons had been glad to dispense with one of the ornaments of that

distinguished corps. Lieutenant Fernside's losses on the turf and at billiards had been so great that nothing could save him from bankruptcy but an exchange to an Indian Regiment, and most of his brother officers had said, "Go, and a good riddance." Before sailing, he and Millicent came to say farewell to their friends at Little Lorton; but the lieutenant's reputation had preceded him, and the Misses Fernside made little pretence of welcoming their profligate kinsman. His poor wife, shamefaced and sick at heart, avoided all her old acquaintances; and the two quitted Lorton "without beat of drum," as the lieutenant said—for, brief as his visit had been, he had found an opportunity of contracting sundry liabilities to the Lorton tradesmen. The letter which came from Garmpore to Patty Wayne showed that things had been going from bad to worse with Captain Fernside, whose old habits had broken out with tenfold vigour since their arrival in India; and Millicent's health was so wretched that she feared—no, she actually hoped—that her misery would not be of long duration. And in the postscript was a last sad message to Edgar, which the writer begged might be faithfully delivered to him. But neither Mary nor Patty had the courage to comply with her request; and this letter was not, according to custom, displayed upon the work-basket.

"Do you know who is coming to Lorton, Ed-

gar?" asked Mary Wayne, as her brother came into the parlour one forenoon, hot and tired, from a long excursion with Mr Booth among the sick and poor of the Factory Lane quarter. "Of course I do," returned the minister, stretching out his legs upon the sofa and fanning himself vigorously with an uncut copy of the 'Narrow Magazine;' "I had a letter myself this morning."

"A letter! Had *you* a letter?" said Mary, opening her eyes wide with astonishment, and speaking very slowly. "Poor Edgar! I hope you may have strength given you to get well through it."

"Thank'ee, ma'am; I shall want it badly, I know, if she is half as pretty as she used to be."

"Edgar"—in a reproachful tone—"you really shouldn't speak of such things in such a way. What could people think if they were to hear you?"

"Why, they would think, I suppose, that I had been too rash in giving up Meadow Villa. But you would not mind having us in the house, would you, until something better turns up for poor old Booth? She is so very quiet and gentle, that even Patty could not manage to fall out with her."

"What! live together in this house!" cried Miss Wayne, starting to her feet in horror. "Edgar Wayne, this is too dreadful; it is absolutely sinful in a minister to speak this way, even in jest. You ought to have more respect for your sister, sir, than

to mention such a thing in her presence;" and Mary indignantly gathered up her work and was going to leave the room.

"My dear Polly, stay half a minute," cried Edgar, with a look of amused curiosity, "and do explain yourself. What would be so dreadful and sinful in Miss Shillingford and I staying together here, always supposing we *did* get married? I don't see what there is disrespectful in that. You are not afraid she would cherish designs upon your housekeeping keys, are you; and that I would be aiding and abetting in her designs? Was that what you were alarmed about?"

"Miss Shillingford, Edgar!" cried Miss Wayne, turning round in the door and coming back into the room. "What Miss Shillingford? whom do you mean?"

"Why, Edith Shillingford—old Shillingford of the 'Methusaleh's' daughter. Wasn't it of her you were talking? I had a letter, as I said, from brother Bart this morning, and he says that he and his *cara sposa* are going to run down here for the Easter holidays; and that they are bringing the daughter of Bart's senior director with them for the express purpose that I may fall in love with her: kind, isn't it? Bart, in his business way, gives so many details regarding the young lady's prospects, that the latter part of his letter reads like the money article of a morning newspaper."

"Oh, I'm so glad that Bart is coming," cried Miss Wayne; "and I have heard so much of Edith Shillingford, that I am dying to know her. How odd it would be if you should fall in love with and marry a great heiress! Why, half the girls in the Meadow Street Chapel would turn Church-women for spite. I must let papa and Patty have the good news."

"Wait a little, my dear," cried Edgar, catching hold of her dress as she was hurrying from the room; "it is clear that some one else is coming to Lorton besides Bart and Miss Shillingford. Now tell me frankly of whom you were thinking when you tried to have that pretty tiff with your affectionate brother."

"Oh, Edgar," said Miss Wayne, in an altered tone, and coming back into the middle of the room with a grave look upon her face, "I cannot—that is, I should not speak about it; and yet I do not see how I can help it. It is better that you should hear it now than at some time when you are not so well prepared for it. I have just had a letter from India, then, and somebody is coming home very soon."

"Millicent Wentworth?" asked Edgar, with just a slight swelling at his throat.

"No; Millicent Fernside," said Mary, laying a stout emphasis on the surname—"one who can be nothing to you, and whom it would be well that

you should meet as seldom as possible. I suppose we shall be obliged to visit her at Little Lorton; but we need not ask her here, and there will be no necessity for you seeing her."

"Poor Millicent," was Edgar's only rejoinder, uttered musingly and in a low voice.

"Yes, poor thing, no one can be more sorry for her than I am," replied his sister; "but she was terribly imprudent, and is now paying the penalty of her folly. I'm sure I don't know why some girls should be so mad for marriage. I'd rather choose to die an old maid any day than marry such a man as Mr Fernside. Do you know, Edgar, that he has actually beaten her? Yes; Miss Cecilia told me that he came home one night from mess abominably tipsy, and slapped her on the cheek, and shook her by the shoulder, because she refused to ask her aunts for money to pay his turf losses."

The pastor of Meadow Street Chapel checked an exclamation which rose to his lips. It was inaudible to his sister, and it was perhaps as well.

"She could not have come home, although the doctors told her that she would not survive another hot season in India, if her aunts had not assisted her," continued Miss Wayne; "and even then Captain Fernside cursed and swore because he should be put to the expense of giving up his furnished house, and insisted that the Misses Fernside should make good the loss to him before he would

allow her passage to be taken. It is horrid to think that any one could be so brutal. Why, he might as well have killed her at once. I am sorry that she is coming to Lorton, for I should have liked to befriend her; but it is impossible that we should encourage her to come here and you in the house."

"Yes, Polly," said Edgar bitterly, "that is just the way of the world. Summer friendships are soon dispelled by the chill blasts of winter. It is very easy to swear eternal affection for one whom everybody is worshipping; but as soon as the tide has turned, when adversity has supervened, and the world begins to look coldly upon your former friend, the true value of such vows is speedily discernible. But I did think, my dear Mary, that your heart would have preserved you from such insincerity. Think how much a woman in poor Millicent Fernside's position must want a friend whom she can trust, and to whom she could open the sorrows of her poor bruised heart."

"How can you be so unjust?" deprecated Miss Wayne. "You know quite well how I loved Millicent Wentworth, and how gladly I would give her all the support that one dear friend can give another. But we must think of you. What would the world say—what would your congregation think—if Milly were to come here as freely as she did in the old times? You really must be careful for

your own sake, and avoid her as much as possible."

"Thank you, Mary, for the compliment to us both," replied Edgar, gravely, as he rose to go. "If Millicent Fernside has aught of the modesty and self-respect of Millicent Wentworth, it will not be necessary for me to avoid her; and as for myself, I trust to refer my conduct to a higher criterion than the opinion of my congregation. If I thought my counsel or friendship would lighten Milly's burden by as much as a straw's weight, I would call upon her before she was four-and-twenty hours in Lorton. You needn't shake your head, for it would only be my duty, and God would give me strength to command my feelings while I was engaged upon His work."

III.

About Eastertide it was whispered in the town that Mrs Fernside had arrived at Little Lorton, and that she was living in great retirement with her relations. Her health had been restored by the sea-voyage; and Dr Copeby said that if her mind were right there would soon be little the matter with her body. There had been no intercourse between the Waynes and the Fernsides since Millicent's arrival, for the family in Bank Square were

completely taken up with their visitors from London. Mr Bartholomew, the heir-apparent to the Lorton Bank, had not at the outset of his life walked in the ways of his fathers, and his excesses had compelled Mr Silas to send him away where the name of Wayne would not be disgraced by his ongoings. So to Liverpool went young Bartholomew with a credit of fifty pounds per annum upon the Lorton Bank, and his stipend as sixth clerk in the house of Dall & Gram, the East Indian grain-merchants. Finding this wholly insufficient to supply his wants, Mr Bartholomew naturally thought of marriage; and a pretty, penniless day-governess, who was lodging in the same house, afforded him an excellent excuse for "tempting Providence." On hearing of his son's wedding, Mr Silas prepared himself for the consequences of this folly, whether they should take the shape of burglary or suicide—only he took the precaution of altering his will in favour of Edgar, so that the reputable house of "B. Wayne & Son" might never lie at the mercy of a reprobate. But with marriage a saving change came over the prodigal. He was now compelled to be careful and economical; and as he had all the aptitude for business that belonged to his family, his rise had been rapid in the mercantile world, and he was now secretary to the great "Methusaleh Life and Fire Insurance Company," and a director on the boards of some of the most

flourishing concerns in the city. Mr Silas had, of course, altered his will back again to its original form long ago; and it was said that he had with difficulty extracted a promise from his son to give up his prospects in London and take the management of the Lorton Bank when he himself became unfit for business. Mr Bartholomew was now the great man of the Wayne family, and all the more was made of his success that no one had ever imagined he would come to anything good.

Since the elder son had become a family man, and the secretary of a great company in the City, he had come to Lorton only at rare intervals and upon flying visits, running down upon a Saturday and returning to town early on Monday morning, in time to wait upon his directors at the weekly meeting of the Methusaleh Board. His prolonged stay upon this occasion was all the more welcome. Mr Silas—for all Lorton continued to call him Mr Silas still, although his father, Mr Wayne, had been dead these twenty years — monopolised his son's company; and the two passed their days in the bank parlour discussing the money-market and commercial gossip until long after business hours. Mr Silas placed great faith in his son's judgment, and he consulted him on almost every venture of importance, quite as much to tempt Bartholomew to interest himself in the bank as that he really needed counsel; for Mr Bartholomew was so much

engrossed in the affairs of the great Methusaleh that he hardly condescended to trouble himself about humbler undertakings. Brother Bart was not much above five-and-thirty, but it was his hobby to fancy himself a staid, respectable middle-aged person; and of all the fogies at the Methusaleh Board, none wore his clothes of a more antiquated or formal cut than the secretary, and none of them was graver or more circumspect in his walk and conversation. Mr Silas, who was generally considered a young man by his contemporaries, could hardly believe himself to be the father of a man who talked of being elderly, and boasted of a little bald patch upon his crown of the size of a florin as a proof of advancing years. When they sat down together in the bank parlour, Mr Silas could not help feeling as if his father had come to life again in Mr Bartholomew, and as if he himself was once more the junior partner of the firm.

On his part, Edgar did as much as could reasonably have been expected to make the rich Miss Shillingford's visit agreeable to her. What time he could spare from his professional duties he devoted to her society. He drove her and his sister Patty all over the country about Lorton; he got up a little picnic for the ladies at the ruined castle of Pottersfield, near Hornham, and a boating-party in Combeport Bay; and he devoted his evenings to their society in the

drawing-room. Edith Shillingford was a quiet, silent girl, with a pure red and white complexion, and eyes that seemed to melt as you looked into them. Both the Misses Wayne saw at once that she would make a charming sister-in-law; and many and deep were the plots which the two hatched with Mrs Bartholomew to bring about a marriage between Edgar and the heiress. But neither Miss Shillingford's winsomeness nor her fortune made the least impression upon the minister's heart, although he could not conceal from himself that Miss Shillingford would not be angry although he were to carry his attentions further than mere courtesy. Although a Churchwoman, Miss Shillingford had waited regularly upon Edgar's ministrations in Meadow Street, and had confided to Patty how much she enjoyed the services, and how eloquent the sermons were. Patty had taken her to see Meadow Villa under pretence of paying a visit to Mrs Booth; and the heiress had said, with a half-sigh, that the mistress of so sweet a place must be a happy woman. In short, as all the Wayne family could see at a glance, there was only one thing wanted to secure the match, and that was a direct overture on Edgar's part. But all his sisters' hints, all Mr Silas's suggestions, and all Brother Bart's naggings, were in vain; and Edgar bluntly told them that he would never say a word of love to Edith Shillingford.

The thought of meeting with Millicent lay heavily upon Edgar's mind. He knew that it would be better for his peace if he were never to meet her again; but he could not bear the idea of turning his back upon her, now that she was deserted and heart-broken. He had sought counsel where the best counsel is to be found, and he had prayed that his steps might be ordered aright to do what best became him as a minister, and would be most conducive to Milly's happiness. He was quite aware of his own weakness where his old sweetheart was concerned; and it was not in his own strength that he trusted when he made up his mind to bravely face the danger. His love for Milly was as intense as ever, and he knew that such love was a heinous sin—doubly heinous in a minister of the Gospel. But what could he do? Religion does not petrify the heart, and there are devils not even to be cast out by prayer and fasting. But there was no spot of impurity in Edgar's affection. All that he sought was Millicent's welfare and happiness; and that he might even in the smallest degree contribute to this, he was prepared to place himself in a false position with society—to run the risk of having his motives misconstrued, and to bear both odium and scorn on her behalf.

On the Sunday after he had made up his mind to call at Little Lorton without further delay, he had to undergo a severe trial. As he raised his

eyes from the hymn-book, they fell upon a face which might have been the only face in the congregation, for he could distinguish no other. A sad, pale face it was; the bright red cheeks that had once belonged to it were blanched by the fierce heat of a tropical sun, the clear blue eyes were dimmed and sunken, and care and sorrow had stamped many premature wrinkles upon the brow that used to be smoother and more white than Parian marble. It was a trying Sunday for the minister of Meadow Street, and it required all his resolution to concentrate his mind upon his duties. Never had he breathed a more heartfelt prayer for the divine assistance than before beginning his sermon; and never had he felt so great a sense of relief as when he had brought the service properly to a close. It was no feigned headache that confined him to his room for the rest of the day, and made him ask Mr Booth to take his place at Meadow Street in the evening; for his head was in a whirl, and his heart was torn by the pangs of a resuscitated sorrow.

At length they met. It was in presence of Millicent's aunts, and the greetings which they interchanged were of the most formal character, such as might have passed between persons whose acquaintance had never ripened into friendship. A forced conversation was with difficulty maintained, in spite of Millicent's stiffness and Edgar's

shyness. They talked of the weather, of Meadow Street Chapel, of India, of everything but that which each knew the other to be thinking of; and when they parted, each retired with a heavy weight at heart, and bitter feeling of the impassable gulf which had sprung up between them since last they met. As the Misses Fernside were members of the Meadow Street congregation, Edgar had always been a regular visitor at Little Lorton; and after Millicent's arrival he continued to call as frequently as formerly. The old ladies were justly incensed at their kinsman; and knowing the deep interest which the minister took in Millicent, they made him the confidant of all their complaints against Captain Fernside and of their doubts regarding their niece's future. Edgar was glad to think that he could be of service to his old love, and that he could do something to make her position at Little Lorton more pleasant — for Miss Cecilia, whose temper had not been improved by a little disappointment in the matter of Dr Wordly, the rector, was somewhat fond of pointing out how imprudence works its own punishment, and of grumbling at the trouble which Millicent had brought upon the family; but Edgar interfered with ministerial authority, and recalled Miss Cecilia to a more Christian spirit. At such times the old maid would almost kill her niece with kindness to

obliterate the recollection of her petulance. "I wish she had married you, Mr Wayne," Jemima would say; "but you are much too good for a silly girl like her. I wish she had married an honest and sober crossing-sweeper rather than that wicked Dick Fernside. If I only thought he might be accepted, I would be glad to hear that he was dead to-morrow. Why, then you might—but it is very wrong to think of such a thing," added Miss Jemima, checking herself. Edgar knew quite well what was passing in Miss Jemima's mind, but he said nothing, and changed the subject, although it cannot be denied that his mind frequently turned to the contingency of Captain Fernside's decease putting an end to all their trouble. As a Christian man and a minister, he was fully sensible of the impropriety of this feeling, and strove hard to conquer it, but human nature was too strong for him. The world knows well how powerful a restraint religious principle imposes upon *doing* evil, but each one can only say for himself how far it prevails against *thinking* evil.

The Waynes soon began to look with much anxiety upon Edgar's frequent visits to Little Lorton, and to drop broad hints about the scandal likely to arise. Mr Silas said he felt a delicacy in noticing the matter; for though Edgar was his son, he was also his ecclesiastical superior, and it is hardly the part of a deacon to criticise his

minister's conduct. Brother Bart, who, having been a scapegrace in his youth, was naturally very rigid in his notion of propriety, entered a special protest against what he called Edgar's folly.

"I shan't say anything about your neglect of Miss Shillingford, although, let me tell you, my dear fellow, that such offers seldom fall in the way of men in your line of life. You don't often find a Dissenting parson marrying twenty thousand pounds, unless the lady be *dévote;* although, mind, I don't mean to say that a little of that may not be a good thing"—Brother Bart, be it remarked, had developed Broad Church notions since he became secretary of the Methusaleh, and would probably have abjured the sect of his family but for the Dissenting connection upon which the business of Waynes's bank chiefly rested—"but I really must blow you up about this Little Lorton business. Of course there is no real harm in your going there, but you know as well as I do how confoundedly people gossip in a little place like this; and there are a lot of fellows about your congregation who would keep you in no end of hot water if they only got a handle against you. Take my advice, and don't go near the house until Mrs Fernside is away; and if she were a prudent person she would not stay long. I can't say that I approve of women leaving their husbands in this fashion."

"But Fernside had behaved villanously to her—

had actually beaten her," broke in Edgar, who could never bear to hear Millicent's reputation called in question.

"Umph! Depend upon it, my dear Edgar, there are always faults on both sides in such affairs; and what can be expected of reckless ill-assorted unions? But if Fernside and his wife have quarrelled, that is only so much more reason why you of all men should not intervene between them. If the Captain is only half as malicious as Fetlock of his old regiment calls him, he is quite capable of making you co-respondent in a divorce case, upon no other grounds than your visits to Little Lorton; and you know the bare rumour of such a thing would utterly ruin your clerical prospects."

"Let Fernside do his worst; so long as his wife is connected with my congregation, and stands in need of my counsel as a Christian minister, I shall not be deterred from doing my duty by such considerations."

"Oh, of course if you look at it in that way there is no use in arguing," said Brother Bart, with some difficulty repressing his inclination to get angry; "but there is another thing that you will do well to consider. All men are mortal, even ministers; and every one knows how much easier it is to get into an intrigue than to get out of one."

"My dear brother, I cannot allow even you to

speak in such a manner," said Edgar, firmly. "You are quite welcome to say what you please about me, but intrigue and Mrs Fernside's name must not be mentioned in the same breath. The poor girl is as guileless as a new-born child."

"Now look here, Edgar, and don't get angry," persisted Bart. "I'm your elder, and have seen twice as much of the world as you are ever likely to see, and I caution you that you run the risk of getting into a serious scrape. You were very fond of this girl once, and may be so still. What assurance have you that you will always be able to control your feelings with regard to her, if you expose yourself to the temptations of her society? Just think what a little matter may make mischief. If you don't keep away from her, mark my words, you will repent it. It would be a rare windfall for the morning papers if a man in your position were to come up before Lord Penzance."

"I shall never avoid any temptations that come to me in the path of duty," replied the minister. "This poor girl stands in more need of my consolation and advice than any other member of my congregation; and shall she be denied these because I once loved her? And what I lack in strength will be made up to me, so long as my sole object is to heal the broken-hearted."

"Oh, very well then; there is no use in saying anything more about it," said Bartholomew, going

off in a pet. "Take your own way, and take the consequences. I shan't be so ill-natured afterwards as to remind you that you had better have followed my advice;" and the secretary of the Methusaleh strode down-stairs to the bank parlour to relieve his spleen by disadvising Mr Silas from the renewing of every mature bill that came before them that morning.

At first the members of Meadow Street were so much occupied in discussing Miss Shillingford's visit, that they failed to notice how frequently their pastor's forenoons were spent at Little Lorton. All agreed with wonderful unanimity, after hearing the amount of Miss Shillingford's fortune, that their minister was likely soon to become a benedict. Mr Swift, the manufacturer, who had a marriageable daughter, thought that nothing tended so much to diminish a minister's "usefulness" as the marrying a stranger, who could not be expected to take any interest in his congregation or his work. The same gentleman did not seek to dissemble his disgust at Mr Wayne's marrying for money, and openly hinted that if the grace of God had been the quality their pastor was most anxious to find in his future wife, he need not have gone outside his own congregation. Phillips, the chemist, had grave doubts as to what would come of their minister marrying with a Churchwoman. The future Mrs Edgar Wayne must, of course, conform to her husband's denomina-

tion; but who could say what effect her Erastian tendencies might not ultimately produce upon their pastor? Matters might soon be as bad at Meadow Street as in St Augustine's Chapel at Hornham, where Dr Courtenay, the minister, had inserted the thin end of the liturgical wedge by reciting the Lord's Prayer at almost every diet of worship. And Goodsir, the grocer, averred that the minister would not be a Wayne if he didn't know the right side of a shilling; and that, for his part, he did not wonder at the work being obstructed when the Babylonish garment and the shekel of silver were concealed even in the pulpit itself. Even Mr Booth, though not much given to gossip, had heard the rumour, and significantly told his colleague that his family's health had been well recruited by their pleasant change from Factory Lane, and that he was quite ready to give up Meadow Villa to its rightful owner at the shortest notice. But Wayne laughingly told him that there was no necessity for his shifting, and promised him a good six months' warning before he was disturbed. And Mr Booth, as he paced the lilac-shaded walks of the Villa, and thought of the smoke and the smells of Factory Lane, reproached himself for his selfishness in feeling glad that there was no immediate probability of Wayne taking a wife.

Not a word had ever passed between Edgar and

Millicent regarding their old love, but a communion of sorrow drew them closely together, and gave them a sad happiness in each other's society. At first one or other of the aunts had made a point of being present in the drawing-room with Mrs Fernside when Edgar called, but by degrees this dread sense of propriety vanished, and they ceased to put themselves about for the minister's visits. The two were but ill at ease to be thus left alone, and there was a feeling of awkwardness and restraint between them, which at once disappeared when Miss Fernside or Miss Cecilia added herself to their society. The ice was not yet broken, and each shrank from putting forth a hand to break it; but they well knew that sooner or later one or the other must speak out.

Half-way between Lorton and Hornham are the Pottersfield brickworks, where Mr Booth had a weekly meeting. Wayne took a great interest in the brickmakers, and liked to escape from the formal and respectable Christianity of his Meadow Street adherents to the rough heathenism and dogged independence of the Pottersfield workmen. Poor Mr Booth had laboured long and zealously among them, opening their eyes to a sense of their guilt and their danger, and telling them with very little reserve how small a chance they had of avoiding everlasting perdition; but his labours did not do much good. Two or three of the more serious

workmen and their wives were the only attendants at Mr Booth's meeting, but still the good man persevered that he might win even one soul. Wayne had better luck. He went among the brickmakers in a frank, unaffected way, carefully eschewing anything like preaching, preferring rather to make the men talk than to talk himself, gaining their confidence and goodwill, and every now and then leading their thoughts to better things. Mr Booth had no faith in anything but "preaching and the ordinances," and was inclined to look upon Edgar's intercourse with the men as a mere waste of time in idle gossip; but he could not help remarking that when the "gen'leman parson chap" was expected at the brickworks, the meeting-room began to offer a successful rivalry to the "Chequers" down the way.

Coming back from Pottersfield one evening, when Mr Booth was anxious to get home to visit a sick parishioner, Wayne, presuming upon his intimacy with the Misses Fernside, proposed that they should take a bypath through the grounds of Little Lorton, which would save them at least a mile. It was pleasant to change the dusty turnpike road for the crisp grassy footpath under the old beeches, and to catch glimpses of the setting sun through the breaks in the trees. But just as they were opposite the old manor-house, Edgar, who was walking first, gave a start and an exclamation, for straight before them

was Millicent, meeting them with an open letter in her hand. She too started and looked about her, but there was no means of evading the intruders. She hurriedly put the letter in her pocket, but she could not conceal the red eyes and swollen cheeks, which too plainly indicated her distress.

"Excuse me half a minute, Booth," said the minister of Meadow Street; "I must apologise to Mrs Fernside for our intrusion. I'll be after you in an instant;" and, lifting his hat to the lady, Mr Booth passed on and waited for his companion beneath an old oak-tree some hundred yards ahead.

"I am sorry to see you in affliction, Mrs Fernside," said Edgar, as he took her hand; "I hope that nothing has occurred to seriously disturb you."

"I am very unhappy," replied she, almost choking upon the words, as the tears again began to fall.

"Poor Milly! Heaven knows how much I feel for you. I have no claim to share your sorrow, but gladly would I bear the whole weight of it myself. Is there nothing that I can do for you?"

"Oh," sobbed Millicent, "I am so miserable; and how can I seek sympathy from you of all men in the world, after having treated you so badly? My punishment is only too just."

"No, Milly, you were not to blame—it was only my infatuation that has brought all this trouble upon us," said Edgar, as he pressed her hand;

"but that is all past, and will not recall. Let us rather think how we can comfort and strengthen each other in our different positions. You must let me be a brother to you, Milly, since Providence has denied me a dearer relationship. Believe me, there is nothing in man's power which I would not do to secure your happiness. I loved you always, and I love you still; and though it may be a sin for me to say it, I cannot help telling you so."

"You are only too good, and I am utterly undeserving of your kindness. But oh, Mr Wayne, whom else is there that I can confide in?"

"Call me Edgar, as in the old days, Milly; remember that I am your brother."

By degrees Millicent unburdened herself of her troubles. She told how speedy had been her repentance when she found that she could not give the heart where she had given the hand; how keenly she felt the imprudence of marrying for a pique; and how wretched her husband's dissolute conduct and brutality had made her. "He cares nothing for me," she said, "if it were not that I am to have Little Lorton when my aunts are gone; and I think he would have been well pleased if I had died at Bombay when I was so ill, if he had not known how glad I would be to get rid of my wretched life. He actually took money from aunt Jemima to be kinder to me, and when he had got it he made a point of treating me worse than he

had done before. And this very evening I have had a letter from him telling me that if I do not come out to India in the beginning of next cold weather he will take leave to come home and fetch me. I suppose I shall be obliged to go, for I cannot bear the thought of my dear aunts being molested by his presence. My only consolation is that if I go back to the East I shall not have long to suffer."

"No, Millicent, you must not think of such a thing; your health is too delicate to stand the rigour of a tropical climate. So long as you are with your aunts you are safe from Captain Fernside's brutality, and by his conduct he has forfeited all claim to your obedience. Whatever comes of it, you must not go back to be beaten and abused. Perhaps the time will come when your husband may yet reform, and your married life will be all the happier for the clouds at the beginning."

But Millicent shook her head. "You do not know how bad he is, and how obstinately he sets himself to gain his ends. If I did not go to him, he would think nothing of coming to Little Lorton and carrying me off by force."

"Whatever happens, Milly, you will count upon me as one who would do anything to serve you," said Edgar, raising her hand to his lips. "But the dusk is falling, and you must let me take you home; but, bless me! what has become of Booth?"

He might well ask that, for Mr Booth had waited until his patience was fairly exhausted. He had coughed as loudly as good manners would allow him, had rattled with his stick among the branches, and had walked away for a few yards, and then stood up again, but without managing to attract Mr Wayne's attention. And when he could in conscience stay no longer, the good man had gone away, shaking his head gravely, and sorely troubled in spirit, for he liked not this familiarity of his colleague with the officer's wife.

IV.

It would be impossible to describe the consternation that seized upon the members of the Meadow Street Chapel when the news began to be bruited about that their minister's visits to Little Lorton were much too frequent to be altogether proper, considering the former relationship between him and Mrs Fernside. It is always difficult to trace a scandal to its source, but we much fear that good Mr Booth had expressed a hope to the wife of his bosom that Wayne might not get entangled with Mrs Fernside again; and that the worthy lady, in the depths of her gratitude to Edgar, had given her gossips a bit of her mind about that "odious officer's wife," who was doing her best to inveigle the young

minister. The matter soon became the talk of the whole town. Propriety, it was calculated, had not received such a shock since silly young Miss Springthrope had eloped with the youngest clerk in her father's office; and then as the parties were Church people it had not mattered so much. But for the minister of Meadow Street, and a Wayne to boot, to be involved in an intrigue with another man's wife, was enough to bring a signal judgment upon the town. Factory Lane was not slow to seize upon so good a ground for attacking Meadow Street; and thanks were fervently returned that whatever might be the demerits of Mr Booth's sermons, his moral character was at least irreproachable—no one having ever so much as charged him with coveting his neighbour's wife. Meadow Street, when assailed, pleaded the groundlessness of the accusation, as well it might; but among themselves the members did not scruple to discuss their minister's guilt. Mr Swift was particularly severe upon the vices of the aristocracy, and on the lax *morale* that prevailed in the exclusive circles of Lorton society. He had never had any confidence in Mr Wayne after he had found him out to be a tuft-hunter and a hanger-on upon the local plutocracy; and when reminded of Edgar's labours among the Pottersfield brickmakers, he said that there was no doubt the unhappy young man was only gratifying a natural taste for low society. What interest had Mr Wayne

shown in the middle-class members of his congregation? He had only taken tea once in his, Mr Swift's, house; and as he was the father of a daughter, Mr Swift was thankful that their intercourse had not gone further. The novel-reading Misses strolled out to Little Lorton to look at a walk where the guilty couple were said to hold assignations. Match-making mammas, knowing that marriage was impossible between the parties, did not care to pass a hasty censure, but significantly said that Mr Wayne would do well to settle down and take a wife of his own before worse came of it. The better men of the congregation who were intimate with the minister, and knew him to be incapable of such misconduct as was laid to his charge, warmly took Mr Wayne's part, and did their best to stifle the clamour; but even they could not help owning that the minister was laying himself open to misconstruction.

The Wayne family were the only persons in Lorton who knew nothing of the storm that was brewing. They could not help feeling that Edgar's visits to Little Lorton were attracting notice, but they had no conception of the malignant flights of imagination of which Lorton gossips were capable. Mr Bartholomew and his party had returned to town, and Mr Silas felt a diffidence in interfering in such a delicate matter. Mary Wayne was the only person besides Bartholomew who had ventured to speak to

the minister upon the subject; and, trusting fully in her brother's integrity, she could not advise him to turn his back upon the poor defenceless women at Little Lorton, who had no other male friend to whom they could confide their troubles, or from whom they could seek counsel against the bullying blustering captain of dragoons. Miss Wayne was nearly as often at Little Lorton as her brother; and calumny declared her to be fully worse than he was, for aiding and abetting him in his lawless passion.

But how fared it with Edgar himself? Where, alas! was that strength upon which he had relied for bringing him safely through the fiery ordeal? His love for Millicent had now got so much the mastery over him, that he seemed to have lost all self-control where she was concerned, and to have become dead to every consideration that interfered with his passion. Thoughts which made him shudder were constantly assailing him, and the strictest religious exercise failed to dispel them altogether. And yet his mind was pure—purer far than the hearts of those worldlings who were charging him with all sorts of baseness. Provided Millicent's happiness could be secured, he cared little or nothing what became of himself; but he trembled when he thought how much he would sacrifice both of honour and reputation, if by such a sacrifice her happiness could be promoted. He would have liked

some trustworthy adviser to consult with, but he felt that whatever advice he got, he must still hold by his own course, and fight Millicent's battle through both scorn and infamy. His devotion had made the old ladies at Little Lorton ready to worship him. Everything relating to Millicent and her husband was regulated by his advice; and Indian mail day hardly ever passed without a messenger calling at Bank Square "with Miss Fernside's compliments, and could Mr Wayne be so kind as to favour her with calling at his earliest convenience?" The Captain's letters were getting more and more stormy. He saw that his chance of the reversion of Little Lorton was not now worth much, and he determined to revenge himself upon the old ladies through his wife. If Millicent did not come out at once, he wrote, he must take leave and come for her. He was not going to remain a grass-widower, that she might enjoy the consolations of a Methodist parson. He had heard of pretty goings-on at Little Lorton, but he had friends who would keep an eye upon them; and woe to the person, whether man or woman, who threw any stain upon the honour of Richard Fernside. It was then cholera time at Garmpore, and sad work the deadly scourge was making in Captain Fernside's regiment. Walker, the commandant, a brave man and a good Christian, died after twelve hours' illness, although he was to have left for England by

the next mail; and his poor young wife at Torquay, who was impatiently waiting to be surprised by the colonel bouncing in upon her, only received the news of his decease. Temple and Stokesby, both excellent officers, soon followed; but Dick Fernside, whose debauched habits might have been supposed to make him a likely subject for the disease, still gambled every night at the mess-house, and cheated young greenhorns with bargains in horse-flesh. Did a feeling of disappointment cross Edgar's breast as he read the obituary in the overland papers? Surely it was a mysterious dispensation that cut off good and useful men like Walker and Stokesby —plunging their families in affliction—and spared a worthless reprobate, whose nearest relations would have been thankful that he had come to no worse ending. But although he groped in the dark, Edgar did not distrust Providence, and looked confidently forward to his way being lightened up for him.

But the great crisis impending was Captain Fernside's arrival. Edgar had fully made up his mind to protect Milly against her husband, irrespective of the consequences to himself. He could not conceal that a scandal might ensue, which would place him in a difficult position with his congregation, or even compel him to give up his charge altogether. But much as he was attached to Meadow Street, he would gladly sacrifice the living rather

than that Millicent should be without a champion in the hour of need. What he was to do he knew not, but he felt that his place was by her side, to ward off from her whatever danger might arise. And as all the confidence of the inmates of Little Lorton rested upon his friendship, he was resolved that their trust should not be misplaced.

Meanwhile the scandal was still gaining ground in the congregation. Mr Swift had raked up all the available evidence against the minister, but finding nothing supported by proof beyond the bare fact of Mr Wayne's constant visits to Little Lorton, had been obliged to throw up the case. But so indefatigable was that gentleman and his colleagues, Messrs Phillips and Goodsir, that the heads of the congregation were soon obliged to yield to the popular clamour, and a "caucus" meeting was held in Mr Swift's counting-house to consider the conduct of Mr Wayne, and the scandal occasioned thereby to the Church and to religion. The Hoskinses, the Lanes, and the Cheshams attended, rather that they might see fair play than that they wished to countenance the popular clamour. When, in spite of their exertions, a motion was carried that a deputation should wait upon the minister and represent to him the congregation's anxiety regarding his connection with Mrs Fernside, and their wish that he should discontinue calling at her house, they took care that

Mr Swift himself should be selected for the unpopular mission. A second meeting was held at Mr Chesham's the same evening, and a telegram was despatched to Mr Silas, who was then in London, begging him to come home upon business of the utmost importance. By the exercise of his authority, they hoped that the ground of offence might be quietly removed, and Mr Swift's efforts to make mischief be happily frustrated.

Mr Swift, however, was not the man to postpone the discharge of a duty to his fellow-members, especially when that duty was to sit in judgment upon the faults of a neighbour. Next afternoon he waited upon the minister, and with many expressions of his own regard, and of the reluctance with which he had undertaken a disagreeable task, he stated his errand. Edgar heard him with a feeling of relief. He knew Mr Swift's real character, and he was thankful that his opponent was one with whom he could deal in a firm manner. Had his old friends Mr Chesham or Mr Lane been the ambassador, he would have been put to a severer trial.

"If any man were to walk into your office and accuse you of breach of trust, Mr Swift, how would you act?" he demanded, after his visitor had pompously unburdened himself of the message. I am afraid you would be inclined to kick him downstairs."

Mr Swift was obliged to confess that he might be tempted to such a carnal act.

"But if I, a minister of the Gospel, were to commit such violence, the whole world would cry shame upon me, I suppose," said Mr Wayne.

Mr Swift, looking uneasily at the parson's athletic proportions, hastily answered that such a proceeding on the part of a minister would be highly improper and unclerical.

"And knowing that my hands were thus tied up, you come and insult me, charging me with breach of trust to my Master, and insinuating that I have been guilty of one of the basest acts that a man can commit. Mr Swift, I am sorry for you. I knew that you were one of those who held the form but not the spirit of Christianity, but I did not think that you were capable of such meanness as to insult a man who could not resent your rudeness. Had I been a layman, sir, you had not dared to say such a thing."

Mr Swift began to stammer out incoherent excuses about duty to his fellow-members—welfare of the Church—zeal for the cause of religion—no offence to Mr Wayne—and scandal likely to arise; but the minister sternly stopped him. "Had I the slightest respect for your character, Mr Swift, or if I thought that you had the least spark of Christian kindliness in your heart, I should have at once explained my motives; but to you I shall only say,

Tell those who sent you that I shall resign my charge if they wish it, but not as a guilty person; and that I decline to be dictated to in my private affairs. By another messenger I might have sent another answer. You will excuse me if I refuse to discuss this matter further;" and holding open the door, he coldly bowed the mortified Mr Swift out of his study.

In a few hours all Lorton was on fire at the indignity offered to Mr Swift. He had been actually turned out of the room; the minister had set the congregation at defiance—had even spoke of kicking Mr Swift down-stairs—had said that he would rather give up his church than his mistress—and a hundred other equally wild exaggerations. Even those who had been inclined to take Mr Wayne's part agreed that such conduct could be no longer tolerated, and that whatever the scandal might be, Mr Wayne must on no account be allowed to preach next Sabbath unless he made some explanation and apology.

As it happened, Mr Wayne did not preach next Sunday. Mr Silas, driving home from the station that evening, deeply distressed at the trouble which had come upon his family, saw Edgar walking rapidly in the direction of the Little Lorton road. He stopped the conveyance and got down.

"My dear boy," he said, "you must forgive me if I speak to you about this sad matter. It has

given me a deal of trouble for a long time, although I scrupled to mention it. Don't think that I doubt your honour in the least; but really you are giving serious occasion for scandal to the congregation, and I do hope you will be prevailed upon to cease your visits to that house."

"My dear father, you must forgive me if I decline. If comforting the helpless and the afflicted can scandalise any one, I am extremely sorry for him. You cannot think how much I love her, nor what I would sacrifice to make her happy."

"Poor fellow!" said Mr Silas, with an involuntary sigh; "I fear you will get into an awful scrape with the world."

"God can put me right," said Edgar, bowing his head reverently as he resumed his walk; and Mr Silas returned to Bank Square with a heavy heart.

Edgar strolled on, his head in a whirl, hardly knowing where he was going, but mechanically following the road to Little Lorton. The night seemed to be closing around him, and no ray of light showed where the dawn was to break. As he walked up the avenue towards the house, Robert, the gardener, came hastily running towards him.

"Hi, Mr Wayne, Mr Wayne! Miss Jemima says as how you mustn't come near the house if you haven't had the smallpox. Poor Miss Milly—Mrs Fernside, I mean—be mortal bad, and Dr Copeby have been with her all the afternoon."

"Good heavens, Robert! how did this happen?" asked Edgar. "She was well enough when I was here last. But I am not afraid of infection, and will see Miss Fernside."

And up he went to the house in spite of Miss Jemima, who waved him off from the drawing-room window. The old ladies were in great consternation. Millicent, it appeared, had been visiting the sick child of the coachman, and it was soon discovered that the little girl's illness was smallpox of the virulent type. The little one was dead, and Dr Copeby considered Millicent in a critical condition, but still he had hopes.

In spite of Miss Jemima's remonstrances, Edgar insisted upon seeing the patient, and he was at last admitted to the sick-room. "I should not have allowed you to expose yourself in this fashion, Wayne," said Dr Copeby, who was an old college friend, "if I did not think you might be of use. It would be well to have a minister beside her, for though I hope for the best, I much fear she will not get over it.'

Edgar said nothing, but something within told that he was in the presence of death. We pass over the last dread scene. Edgar returned to Bank Square weary in body, but much relieved in mind, next morning, and went to bed at once. It was three weeks before he rose out of it, for he had in turn been seized by the disease. And thus it came

to pass that Mr Booth had to supply the pulpit in Meadow Street on the following Sunday.

Mr Booth's discourse will long be remembered in the annals of the Meadow Street Chapel. "Judgment sermons" were his specialty, but on this occasion he exceeded all his previous efforts. The backbiting, slandering, uncharity, and ingratitude towards the best of ministers, who was at that moment lying at the point of death—nay, might even then be accusing them before the throne—was heartily brought home to the members of Meadow Street, each of whom felt angry with himself and more angry with his neighbour. Mr Chesham hurried to the foot of the pulpit to congratulate the preacher when the service was over, and Mr Booth found himself for the time the idol of the aristocratic chapel. As for Mr Swift, he found occupation in counting the "offering" until the congregation had well dispersed, and next day he went away with his wife for a month's change of air to Combeport. And the reaction did not stop until Mr Wayne became the most popular minister that had ever preached in Lorton; and Bank Square, during the remainder of his illness, was crowded like a market-place with those who came to inquire about his health.